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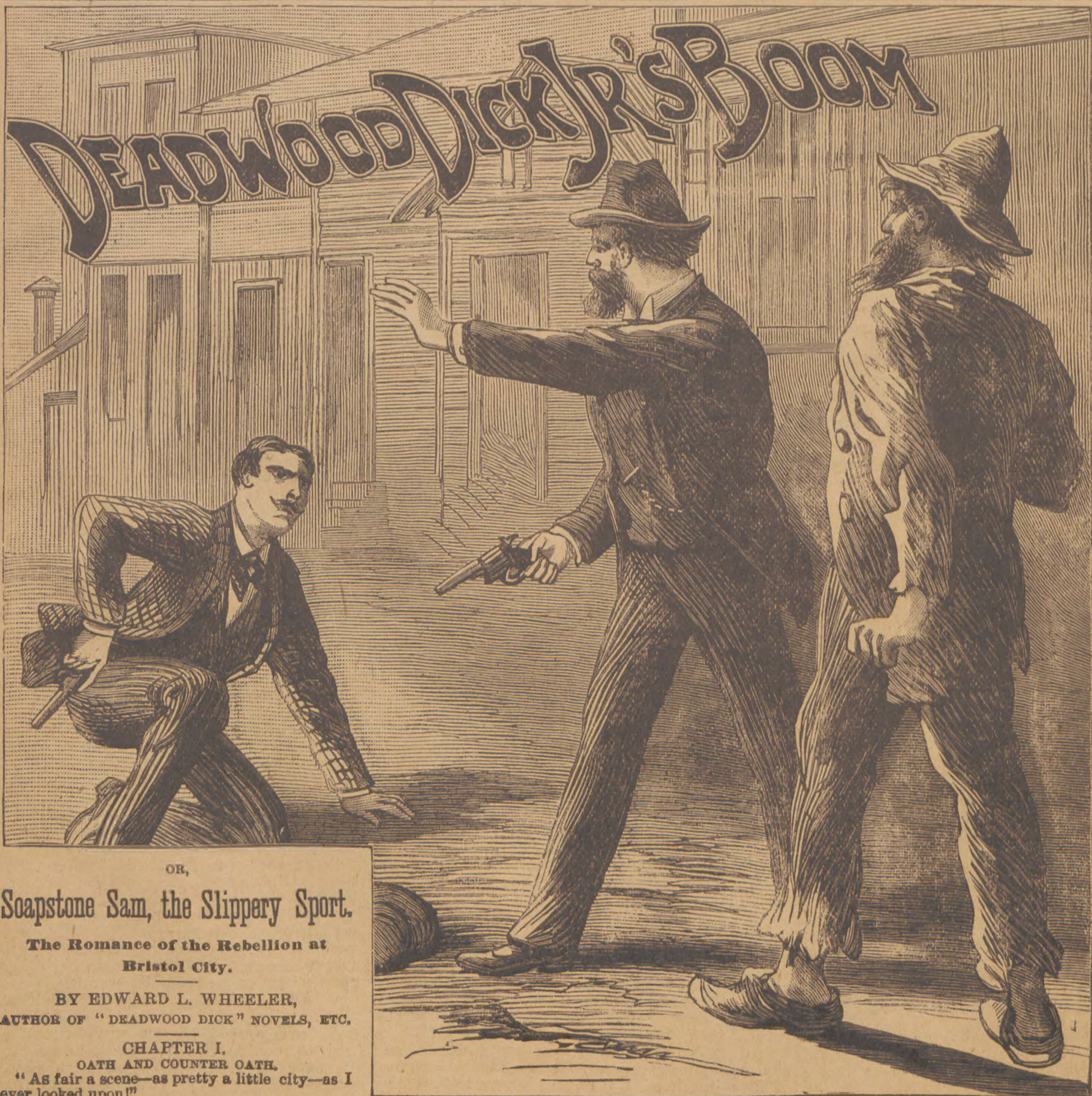
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OR,
Soapstone Sam, the Slippery Sport.
The Romance of the Rebellion at
Bristol City.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.
OATH AND COUNTER OATH.
"As fair a scene—as pretty a little city—as I
ever looked upon!"
The words fell from the lips of a man standing
on the summit of a rugged hill that overlooked a

THE NEW PLAYER WAS SOAPSTONE SAM, THE SLIPPERY SPORT, WHO CAME OUT OF THE
SALOON JUST IN TIME TO STEP BETWEEN THE SEEDY LAWYER AND HIS ANTAGONIST

mountain valley, or more properly an inclosed gulch better known to the Westerner as a "pocket," surrounded on all sides by towering pine-dotted walls.

He was a young man of medium stature but powerful build, clad in the manner of a thoroughbred sport—one of the better kind.

About to speak again, he was interrupted by catching the sound of approaching footsteps further down the trail behind him, and acting upon a sudden impulse, as it seemed, he sprang to cover behind a near-by boulder.

The footsteps drew nearer, and another man soon came out upon the brow of the hill, where he stopped, taking off his hat to the cooler breeze there found, and gazed upon the scene before him as the first had done.

"So, this is Deadwood Dick's domain, is it?" he spoke aloud. "This is the valley pocket that has made him a millionaire!"

He stood silent, thoughtful.

"It is a city in fact," he presently spoke further. "Happy, prosperous—it seems a pity to despoil it; but, that is my intention—ay, that is what I have taken oath to do!"

A hard, cruel look came upon his face, and his fists were tight clinched.

"Yes, Deadwood Dick," he continued, vengefully, "I am here to work you ill if it is in my power to do it." You were the means of sending me to prison once, and I swore then I would get even with you for it. I will bring you to ruin—yes, more than that—I will have your life!"

As the last words fell from his lips he shook his fist at the thriving young city in the peaceful pocket below.

"Yes, I swear it!" more vengefully still. "Burk Dorris is not the man to forget and forgive, curse you! For every year I spent in that accursed prison your blood shall repay! You had a dead-sure thing against me, that I have to admit; but, if it hadn't been for your hounding me and my men as you did, we would have escaped. Enjoy yourself while you may; my oath is made!"

Replacing his hat, presently, he followed along on the trail, making his way around and down toward the pocket, finally to enter the pretty miniature city he had taken oath to ruin.

When he had gone a little way the other man came out from behind the boulder, a half smile curling his lip.

"Well, it strikes me that you are pretty brash, stranger!" he muttered, looking after the retreating knave. "You have undertaken a rather hefty job, if I know anything about this Deadwood Dick. So, that's your oath, is it? Well, now I'll register one myself: If life and strength are spared me I'll watch you, and I think you will be the one to come to grief—not Deadwood Dick. I'll let you feel the grip of Soapstone Sam, the Slippery Sport!"

CHAPTER II.

TROUBLE AT BRISTOL CITY.

BRISTOL CITY was in a state of unusual excitement. A certain portion of the population had risen in rebellion and refused to pay further tribute to Deadwood Dick.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., was the original proprietor of the pocket in which this thriving young city had sprung up, was owner of the mines, and likewise owner of nearly the whole city besides. He had sold some ground, but received rent for the most of it, and while the rents were low yet his income in the aggregate was immense.

That some evil influence had been at work was plain enough. Rent day had passed, and payment had been refused. The argument, in brief, was this: That Deadwood Dick had, really, no more right to claim ownership to that valley pocket than had any other man—not so much, in fact, as had they who had lent their time and toil in building the city; the building made the

city, and the ground ought naturally to belong to the owners of the buildings. There are, however, two sides to every question, and this one was no exception to the rule.

There could be no question but that Dick Bristol had owned the pocket before the city began to grow, and hence, such portions as he had not sold outright must belong to him still. The buildings had sprung up thick and fast, when the boom was at its height, and in every instance Dick or his manager had offered the land for sale then and there, in some cases selling and giving a good, solid deed to the purchaser. In other cases long leases had been given, worded as fairly for the tenant as for the proprietor in all respects. But, all that was thrown aside, now, by the rebellious ones, who were not the best class of citizens by any means; on the contrary, their party was made up of the camp's worst element. The really solid men of the place were in favor of Dick and his rights.

Clyde Carleton, mayor of the city and manager of Deadwood Dick's affairs, was in a quandary. He had sent word to Dick, but being uncertain of his whereabouts, was not sure that his communication had reached him. It was out of his power to collect the rents, but he had called the attention of the tenants to the terms of their leases, and had given warning that proceedings would be taken against them.

Said Joe Garry, proprietor of the Grand Pacific Hotel:

"This is a dirty way to treat the whitest man that ever lived, and I'm opposed to it. Why, more'n one man in the uprisin' wouldn't had no house anyhow if it hadn't been for the help Deadwood Dick gave 'em. Hangin' would be too good for 'em, and when the noble Richard returns he can count on me as one who will fight with him for his rights."

Homely as Joe's expression was, it covered the ground, and that sentiment was held by a good many who had not committed themselves one way or the other.

There was trouble ahead.

"Great currogated cans o' dynamite demolishun!" cried Old Avalanche, the irrepressible. "If Deadwood Dicky wur only at home now things would be different, you bet! Great hambone o' harrowin' horrors! I do wish he would come, fer he is needed, needed mighty bad."

One thing which had thus far puzzled the mayor, was to find out who was the ringleader of the uprising, or who had been its instigator.

The new movement was gaining in favor, till it was feared that only the really sound institutions of the camp would remain true to Dick's interests. Those who had bought of him were with him, of course, since their own titles depended upon the validity of his.

So stood matters at the time of the opening of our story.

A number of men were gathered in the mayor's office, to include Billy Bucket and Johnny Smile—though they were barely over the border from youthhood; and the topic of conversation was the vexing question of the hour.

"You are right, old man," Billy Bucket made response to the remark dropped by Old Avalanche. "If the boss was only here he would pretty quick show somebody somethin' sharp, you bet!"

"He could find out the ringleader; of that I feel confident," supplemented Mayor Carleton. "And that would be a big step in the direction of righting the matter. There is going to be serious trouble, I am afraid."

"You ar' right thar is!" cried Old Avalanche. "Et's goin' ter make trouble fer them what's in et, soon's Deadwood Dicky gets after 'em. Great conglomerated old hambone, I'm dyin' to see him come home! But, he ain't here, and we must hold ther fort till he comes."

"Pards, I have somethin' to say," spoke Joe Garry, then.

"What is et?" demanded Avalanche. "Anything ter my discredit? 'Cause ef it is, by ther great symposiumate old hambone what made soup fer Jupe, et's a lie!"

"No, nothing about you, old man," Joe declared. "It would be a hard matter to say any good about a rank old sinner like you. But, you all know that sport who is stopping at my hotel, of course."

"Soapstone Sam, you mean?"

"Ther same."

"Yes, we know him; what about him? What has he been doin'?"

"Well, do ye know, I have a sort o' sneak-in' suspicion that he has got a hand in this business somewheres."

"Sho! You don't mean et, do ye? Great hambone of ther anterdeluminated days o' famine in ther land o' Goshen! I took him ter be a real white sport, through and through."

"So he may be, but I begin to doubt him," Joe rejoined. "He seems to be making friends with some of the worst of the kickers."

"Still, there may be nothing in that," reminded the mayor. "He is free to make friends with whom he will, and we have to recognize his rights."

"Oh, certainly, that's all right," agreed Joe. "I only brought it up so that he could be watched a little, you know."

"But, he hasn't been here long," said one man.

"Only a couple of days, that's true."

"And there's other strangers here in town," said another. "Why not suspect them all? My opinion is, that the ringleader is right here in the camp, a regular citizen."

"I am inclined to think that way myself," agreed the mayor.

"Lor' Jerusha! et don't make no difference who he is," cried Avalanche, "we must try ter hold ther thing in check till Dicky gets hyer."

Barely had the old scout spoken when a startling thing happened. Something flashed in the light, and a thud was heard like that of a bullet burying itself into a solid timber.

All looked at one another inquiringly.

"What was that?" asked Carleton.

"Hambone! I don't know," cried Avalanche.

"It made me wink, anyhow," declared Johnny Smile.

"Hal!" cried Billy Bucket, who had been looking eagerly about, "here it is."

All looked where he pointed, and there in the floor just behind them stood a huge dagger, still quivering with the vibrations its sudden stop had imparted.

It was buried an inch or more in the solid board, and must have been hurled with great force.

Whence had it come?

No one could answer the question, or even make a reasonable guess.

Around the handle of the weapon was a piece of paper, securely bound in place there with a stout string.

"A communication of some sort, perhaps," remarked the mayor, as he stepped forward and plucked the knife from the floor. "I have heard of such things happening before."

"That's what et must be, by ther great condenserfied old hambone of ther dark periods o' disastrous halucernashuns!" cried Old Avalanche. "Mebby et's a letter from ther p'izen critter himself, warnin' Deadwood Dicky off his ground, or somethin' of that sort."

Carleton was eagerly removing the string, and as soon as that was done he unfolded the paper and read it out aloud. It was addressed to Deadwood Dick by his proper name, and ran as follows:

"You are hereby given fair warning that your days as king of this camp are at an end. We refuse to pay further tribute to you. Further, you are warned to get away from here as quickly and as quietly as you can. We claim the pocket as our own. You have robbed us long enough, and we mean business, as you will find."

"BY ORDER OF COMMITTEE."

CHAPTER III.

SOAPSTONE SAM SPEAKS.

"GREAT lacerated old hambone what lubricated ther gullick of Joner!" cried Old Avalanche, brandishing his fists. "What did I tell ye? I reckon thar will be some fun now, ef I know meself. Oh! if Deadwood Dicky would only put in his appear at this minute, I'd jump fer joy."

"The trouble has now assumed a new shape," observed Carleton. "They have now taken a step in the aggressive and we must meet them half way. I shall call a public meeting at once—"

"Better not," advised Garry.

"Why?"

"These cusses would be in the majority, big."

"Ha! that is so; I did not think. What, then, would you suggest? I am only one, even though I am mayor."

"Hambone o' paralyzin' paradoxashuns!" cried Old Avalanche. "I'll tell ye what ter do. Call ther council together fer a con-flab, an' while that's bein' con-flabberated, me an' ther rest will arm ther men at ther mines."

"A good idea. That is what I will do."

"And it won't be the first time Deadwood Dick has had to fight for his rights here," remarked Garry.

"No, you are right, but he has won by force of arms before, and I think he can do it again. Anyhow, we will do the best we can in the matter pending his arrival."

And so, for the time being, the matter was settled.

Garry and Old Avalanche went to the mines, to inform the superintendent what was required, while Billy and Johnny went around quietly to call the members of the city council to a meeting.

They were soon all together in the mayor's office, where the situation was discussed at great length, and various schemes were hatched for putting down the mutiny; none of which, however, seemed to be the right thing, or equal to the emergency. At last, though, a plan was agreed upon.

They tried to make up their minds, as nearly as they could, what action the proprietor himself would take in the matter if he were there, and the outcome finally was a manifesto, which was to be printed in bold type and posted up in the most conspicuous places about the the camp. An hour later saw it published, and great was the excitement it created.

A man among the foremost in this revolt against Deadwood Dick, was one Jackson Stonecut, better known as "Captain Jack."

He had not been long in the camp, having come in since Dick had gone away on his latest campaign against evil-doers, and hence he knew the redoubtable Richard only by report.

Captain Jack was a big man with a savage face, and was held to be a particularly "bad man."

He had come to the camp with the avowed intention of opening a saloon.

Now at Bristol City the saloon was a limited quantity. There were two, of the first-class order, as saloons go, besides the leading hotel, and that was all. All the smaller ones had been closed up, and Deadwood Dick was determined to allow no more there while he stood at the head of affairs, for he was the bitter opponent of rum.

This man Stonecut had come in, bought a building that would answer his purpose, and hung out his sign.

The building he had purchased, by the way, stood on Dick's ground.

No sooner was the shingle out, than one of Dick's marshals swooped down upon the place and ordered it taken in.

The order was disregarded, and the marshal was defied.

Stonecut said as he had bought the building it was his, and he allowed he would do as he pleased with it.

It was admitted that he had this right, so long as he did not go against the laws of the city, or did not interfere with the rights of others. He had not bought the city.

And then came trouble.

The sign was pulled down, and Stonecut jumped in and whipped a couple of Dick's deputies in great style.

The police came down then, took him in, and he was locked up in the local jail and forced to pay a heavy fine before he would be let out again. Hence he had no friendly feeling for Deadwood Dick.

In the mean time, while he was in jail, the stock for his saloon came along and was promptly poured into the creek, the mayor drawing a check for its value and handing it to Stonecut to make good the loss he had suffered. Bristol City would have no more saloons!

And so it was, when the new movement was started, that Stonecut became a conspicuous figure in it.

But he was not the ringleader, as there was reason to believe.

He was, he said, fighting only for his rights.

Here he had bought a building all in good faith, with the intention of starting a respectable saloon, and now he was disbarred from exercising his rights in the matter.

On the other hand, it was pointed out to him, the laws of the camp were few and simple and all well known, and he had made his purchase with his eyes wide open; but he had intended from the start to set the camp at defiance and do as he pleased anyhow. He had simply made a mistake.

None the less, he was ready to fight the matter.

So it was when the manifesto was published that he was one of the first to call it into question.

"I want ter know," he bellowed to the crowd, "if things ain't coming to a pretty pass! Just look at this, will ye! I declare ef it ain't enough ter make saints swear."

He stood off, as he spoke, and pointed at the placard with his cane.

This took place in the Monte Carlo Saloon, which place, by the way, was under a new management now, and was a worthy place—if any saloon can be so called.

This manifesto was worded in this wise:

"PUBLIC NOTICE.

"Notice is hereby given to all the tenants occupying land owned by Richard M. Bristol, that settlement will be made upon just and equitable terms; thus, tenants may pay the same low amount of rentals as heretofore, according to the terms of their leases; or, they may buy outright at the present current prices for lots and parts of lots; or the proprietor will buy out their buildings and other interests, for cash at justly appraised prices. Persons refusing any of these conditions, will be dealt with according to law."

"FURTHERMORE.

"Threats having been made against the said proprietor, we, the Mayor, Council, and the other loyal Citizens, declare our intention of upholding the law and maintaining order at any cost, and all malicious persons are duly warned that serious consequences will follow close upon any mutinous outbreak on their part."

And that was signed by the mayor and the members of the council.

"Yas, I want ter know ef it ain't," the fellow cried again. "Here is this Deadwood Dick, or his agent—it's all the same, setting himself up for a little lord, and wants us all to bow down to him. Citizens, are ye going to stand it?"

"You bet we ain't!"

"That is the way ter talk," Stonecut cried. "We are free men in a free land, not in bondage!"

"We ar' ther people, you bet!"

"You are not slaves in bondage, I say," repeated Stonecut. "This matter is no funeral o' mine, any further than I'm in it with that saloon job; but I hate to see honest men imposed upon."

"That's what we ar'!"

"We ar' bein' ground down in ther dirt by a bloated millionaire!"

"Down with Deadwood Dick! We own this hyer camp, and we have ther best right to et, you bet."

"Course we do!"

"That is just it," encouraged Stonecut. "Ther last man ter come here has as good a right to land as ther first, and every dollar of rent you pay is makin' a present to your worst foe. Why, there is no end to the skin game; you keep right on payin' and get nothin' in return."

"No more rents!"

"Down with Deadwood Dick's throne!"

"Gentlemen," spoke up a clear, strong voice, at that juncture, "while this is no funeral of mine, as the saying is, will you allow me to chip in a word?"

Looking in the direction of the voice, the crowd discovered the speaker to be the sport, Soapstone Sam.

This personage was a stranger at the camp. He had come there a few days before, had taken a room at the hotel, and seemed to be a gentleman of leisure.

A good-looking man, he was dressed in the finest of cloth and his clothes were of the very neatest cut. He was dark, and wore a thick, full beard, neatly trimmed and parted.

Said one man:

"Et's a free country, Sport, so say what ye please."

"Yes," added Stonecut, "express yer views freely, sir. You have as much right ter do et as I have."

"Well, I merely wanted to raise a point or two of objection to your argument, that was all. Yet it is, as I said, no affair of mine, and I don't care to mix up in it."

"Mebby not; but, what's your point?"

"Did any man here ever stake out a claim and call it his own?"

"Yas, I have done that 'ar," answered one man.

"Well," asked the sport, "did you share it with the next man who happened to come along?"

"Wull, hardly, I reckon!"

"Then how can you expect Deadwood Dick to share his claim here with Tom, Dick, and Harry?"

"This is a different case," declared Stonecut.

"How is it any different?"

"Why, Bristol staked his mine, and that was all right; but, when he gobbled up ther hull pocket, that was all wrong."

"I don't see how, sir. It was public land, and he settled on it and claimed it under the laws of the Territory and the country at large. When he had fulfilled the conditions, the land was his. He was the one to claim it first, and the one who lived up to the requirements."

"And he has got the right to take rent for it, givin' nothin' in return, till it has been paid for over and over again, while the man that pays the rent never gets a claim on it, eh?"

"Exactly. The land, as I understand it, is all for sale; if a man had rather pay rent than buy, that is his lookout."

"But, he won't sell at what it was worth in the first place."

"He's a fool if he did."

"Yet he hasn't done anything to make it valuable."

"I don't see it in that light. Didn't the opening of his mines draw people here and make a city?"

"Wouldn't somebody else have done it, if he hadn't?"

"Very likely; and, supposing it had been you. Put yourself in his place now, and say how you would like it to have the people rise up and try to oust you from your claim. You know you would not like it. You would fall back upon the Government to protect you in your rights, if need be, and the Government would be bound to do it. So, while this is nothing to me, I must say you fellows are taking a very foolish stand in the matter."

CHAPTER IV.

BEHOLD, A STRANGER.

JOE GARRY had been a quiet listener to this. He repented that he had been so hasty to judge the sport, for now it appeared that he was clearly on Dick's side.

His argument had carried conviction to a certain extent, for the loud boasts and threats were done with for the time being, and men were talking among themselves in groups.

About that time a stranger walked into the room—a seedy-looking individual, in a long coat and battered high hat that had seen better days.

Thrusting the fingers of his right hand under the lap of his coat at the second button, he raised the left, and in a deep voice called out:

"Hail! citizens of Bristol City!"

He had the attention of the room immediately.

"Wull, who ar' you?" one man demanded.

"A pilgrim and a stranger here," was the response. "My name is Barrington Burr, and I was once a lawyer. Now I'm a confirmed drunkard and bummer in general, a fellow that would paralyze a whole Keeley institution at one fell stroke."

And he looked it.

"Then what ar' ye doin' hyer?" demanded his questioner. "This hyer is jest ther next thing to a temperance town."

"What! Good heavens, you alarm me! Do you mean to say I can't get a drink here? If that is the case, provide my coffin and dig my grave, for I am as good as dead."

"Oh, et ain't as bad as that; but, it's no camp for a bummer to hang out in, we'll tell you that right at the start."

"Ah! what a load you have removed. Just tell me, can I get a drink here?"

"Yes, if you have got the collat!"

"Which I haven't, I haven't. But, my voice or my legal lore is at your command, and I'll sing a song or give advice for the price of a horn."

"Are you up on law?" asked Captain Jack.

"The time was, sir, when I did not take a back seat for any man."

"Well, if you will give us the law on a point that puzzles us a little, I will set up a drink for you."

"State your case, sir, and make all haste in doing it. I'll give you Chitty and Blackstone, straight from the shoulder. What is the point? Give me the leading facts."

"Well, the case is this: I came here to this camp and bought a building, for which I put up the solid cash. That building is mine, of course."

"Certainly, sir, certainly, always providing that it was owned by the party who sold it to you."

"And it was; there is no question on that point."

"Your building, then. Go on."

"But, that house stands on another man's ground, for which the first owner of the building entered into lease relations with its owner."

"That is straight; your house; but, you assume the lease on the ground. You hold it the same as the man before you held it. Change of hands makes no change in the situation."

"But, you admit that I own the building, and can do with it as I please?"

"You can, sir, so long as you obey the law of the land and the regulations of this camp, and live up to the requirements of that lease. Is that all? If it is, make haste with that drink."

"That's straight law, is it?"

"It is, sir, it is."

"Then my goose is cooked, so far as opening a saloon here is concerned. It is dead against me, that's sure. Now, if you will give your opinion on still another case, I'll give you the money for a double drink."

"State the case. Practice seems to open up lively here."

"Well, it is a matter in which I have no interest myself, but in which I am interested as a looker-on." And with that he told the story of the bolt some of the citizens had made.

"Plain case," the lawyer decided. "Bristol is in the right, and he can force his claim. Better look well to the terms of your leases, citizens, and see what will happen if you don't come down with the rent."

Soapstone Sam then tossed a coin to the man behind the bar, and the seedy lawyer proceeded to irrigate the full money's worth.

Here, for the present, was another clincher against the rascally clique.

"Ha! now I am a man again!" cried the seedy lawyer, as he turned away from the bar, wiping his mouth. "Again life's fire burns within, and I am happy."

A man who had been edging toward him now laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Purty well played, Deadwood Dick," he remarked, "purty well played; but, you can't fool us any longer. Might jest as well own up to ther corn."

The seedy individual drew back a step, surveying the man in a wondering way, as if thinking him crazy.

This man was one Brownlow Jugg, who, from the fact that he was rather under the average in size, had been nicknamed "Little Brown Jugg."

His charge caused excitement in the room, and it was suddenly believed that he had hit upon the truth.

"Sir, I fail to catch your meaning," the lawyer made response to him.

"Et aint no use," Mr. Jugg insisted. "We know you, now, and you may jest as well throw off ther disguise and stand out fer jest who ye ar'."

"But, I am in no disguise, good sir; I am just what I am, nothing more or anything less."

"And ye mean ter say you ain't Deadwood Dick?"

"Assuredly."

"Then I mean ter say you ar' a most 'fer-nal liar, that is all," cried Jugg.

He, too, was one of the rebellious ones, and as much a leader as Stonecut, though neither was the prime mover of the uprising.

He was something of a fighter, in his way, and had more than once made his boast that he would not be afraid to tackle the renowned Richard, spite of his great reputation.

The secret of his delusion was, that he had come to the camp in a peaceful time and had never had the opportunity of seeing Dick on his muscle. He had only seen him as the calm, cool, quiet and gentlemanly sport.

"That is a pretty strong word to apply to a stranger," said the lawyer, in a quiet manner.

"It's jest the word I mean," was the defiance.

"But, you make a mistake, sir."

"Bah! don't you suppose I know you? Haven't I seen you here many a time? I allus said I'd know ye, spite of disguises, though yer have ther name of bein' a good one at that biz."

"May as well own to the corn, Dick," sung out another voice.

"But, gentlemen, I insist that you are making a mistake," the seedy lawyer protested in much earnest. "My name is Barrington Burr, as I have told you, and I have never had any other and never expect to have. Sir, you are mistaken, badly, and I must ask you to take back your words."

"Take back nothin'! You ar' Deadwood Dick, and we all know et."

Old Avalanche was there to take a hand in it.

"Great hambone o' antedelushunary demolishun!" he cried. "Ef et is you, my Dicky boy, knock ther sassy cuss clear over into ther middle o' next week. Don't take sech slack from him."

"But, I'm nobody else than I am!" the lawyer insisted. "I have not a right to the honor you would heap upon me. Still, I am not going to stand here tamely and be called a liar to my teeth, and if you don't take that back, sir, by the immortal shades of brilliant Blackstone if I don't give you cause to repent it."

CHAPTER V.

THE LAWYER A FIGHTER.

THIS bold stand on the part of the lawyer was the cause of excitement anew.

It was now strongly believed that he was indeed Deadwood Dick, in one of his clever disguises.

"Great hambone!" exclaimed Old Avalanche, speaking to Joe Garry. "Et must be ther noble Richard, sure 'nuff! What do ye think 'bout et, Josey?"

"Hang me if I don't half believe you are right," Joe agreed. "If it is him, though, it is the best disguise he ever got on in his life. That ain't Dick's nose, I be hanged if it is."

"Lor! Jerusha! ye don't want ter bet on Dicky when he is in a make-up, fer he is jest as likely ter be somebody else as not. Can't swear to him, and that's ther howlin' truth. But, let's see what the Little Brown Jugg will do wi' him."

"Yes, that may prove the case."

This had been said rapidly, even while the seedy lawyer was yet speaking.

"What!" cried Mr. Jugg. "You mean ter say you ar' goin' ter make me take it back?"

"If you don't, sir, I shall make an honest effort to cram it down your neck for you," was the cool and easy rejoinder he got.

"Then you have ther chance ter do et, fer I take nothin' back. You are Deadwood Dick, and I know et. I have allus said I believed I could lick ye, and now I'm goin' ter try et on."

"Wade in, then, and begin."

The seedy stranger put up his fists in a business way.

"I am in prime order," he added, "after the three drinks I have had, and I'll make it lively for you, you bet!"

"But, et's your fight," Mr. Jugg reminded.

"I thought it was yours."

"See him trying to crawl out of et," cried Jugg. "Didn't I allus say it was more his name 'n anything else?"

"I am not trying to get out of it," declared the lawyer, "but I do insist that you are mistaken in regard to my being other than just what I claim to be. Now, what are you going to do?"

"Haw! haw! haw!" laughed the tickled Jugg. "Didn't he say he was goin' to cram it down my neck fer callin' him a liar? An' now he wants ter know what I'm goin' to do about et. Wull, that's purty good, hang me ef et ain't!"

"Oh! you are waiting for me, eh?" the lawyer cried, seeming to grasp the situation in another light.

"Why, cert, old man!"

"Then you need not wait longer. Take that as a beginner."

As he spoke he reached out with one of his long arms and tapped the Little Brown Jugg on the cheek.

There was instantly a howl from the little, thickset fellow, and he sprung into the fight like a game bantam, striking out in a lively manner but not doing any great damage.

In fact, he did not do any damage at all.

The seedy lawyer met his blows and parried them neatly, and at the end of a minute Mr. Jugg stopped.

"Wull, I be darn!" he exclaimed. "You do know how to handle 'em don't you? I never believed half I'd heard of you."

"I used to be able to handle myself pretty well, in my younger days," was the quiet reply.

"Then you must be in your younger days yet, I reckon."

The crowd was pleased, or a certain portion of it, for this fellow Jugg had been a bully in his way, and most of the men were afraid of him.

And then, too, there were those who now felt sure this must be Deadwood Dick, in a disguise, and if so, the outcome of the fight was known beforehand. The redoubtable Richard could not be downed.

"Well, do you take it back?" the seedy lawyer asked.

"Naw, I don't take it back," was the defiant retort the Little Brown Jugg gave him. "That was only one try."

"And this will be the second and last," the cool stranger declared. "If you do not take back your words, now, I'm going to wipe the floor with you. Those three drinks seem to have given me a delight in fighting."

"Sail in, then, fer I take nothin' back!"

"All right; it's your funeral."

Putting up his fists again, the seedy lawyer took a step forward, and before the Little Brown Jugg could realize what was going to happen it had happened.

The stranger had made a sudden thrust with his left fist, and Mr. Jugg was lifted clear off his feet and sent headlong under a table at some distance, where he landed all in a heap.

"Hooray!" yelled one man, and a wild cheering immediately followed.

"Bully fer Deadwood Dick, ther Prince of Pistol Pocket—that was!" cried one of Dick's friends.

"Great old rampagin' signs of cavoortin' demolishun!" cried Avalanche. "That was ther best I've seen sence ther time ther Great Triangle tackled forty Injuns and wiped out—"

"You mistake, gentlemen, you mistake, you mistake!" Mr. Burr urged earnestly. "I am not the man you take me to be. I am only what I am. Pray do not deceive yourselves further."

"It's no use, Richard," spoke out Joe Garry. "The crowd is onto you in good shape, so you might as well own up."

"No, no, you are mistaken—I tell you you are mistaken."

"All right, then, mistaken it is."

Joe gave it up at that, though his conviction was not changed. He believed Dick wanted to carry on the deception further.

The Little Brown Jugg was crawling out from under the table, now, and he was about as silly-looking a man of his age and size as ever was seen.

"Sa-ay," he drawled, "did anybody else git hurt?"

That caused a laugh.

"Are you satisfied?" asked the seedy lawyer.

"Yas, I'm satisfied," was the reply. "I'm satisfied you ar' Deadwood Dick, now. All they have said of ye is so; I have had proof of et."

"I still declare that you are mistaken, sir. I am not Deadwood Dick. If I remind you

of him by the fact that I am able to handle my fists a little, I will explain that I used to be quite a boxer at school."

"Wull, we will take your word for it, but all the same we don't believe it," said Mr. Jugg, taking care to remain out of reach.

"Why, even your own friends recognize you, now," put in Mr. Stonecut.

"Mistaken, mistaken," averred the lawyer.

With a wave of the hand he dismissed the matter as unworthy of any further debate.

Mayor Carleton had now entered the saloon, and Soapstone Sam privately addressed him.

"What's your opinion, mayor?" he asked.

"Do you think the man is Bristol?"

"I hardly know what to say about it," Carleton evaded. "We shall have to take the man's word for it, for the present."

"But, it does not seem reasonable, sir, that even Deadwood Dick could so disguise himself as not to be recognized by those who have known him so well."

"You will change your mind when you come to know him as well as I know him."

"Well, it is a queer case, and I am growing interested in it. I shall be glad to see the outcome of it all."

While these remarks were being exchanged the lawyer had made inquiry about a hotel, some place where he might make favorable terms upon an empty pocketbook, and Garry invited him to the Grand Pacific.

When they had left the saloon opinion was outspoken.

Said one man:

"Ef that ain't Deadwood Dick, then it's his ghost, and I know et; but, thar ain't much of a ghost about et, so et must be Dick. What ye say?"

And there was a general murmur of approval.

"Well," said Carleton, "I only hope you are right, for then this question of proprietorship here will probably be settled soon."

"Only one way ter settle that," cried one of the hot-headed ones.

"And what way is that?"

"He must give us titles clear to our holdings."

"Right there comes up the main question," here put in Soapstone Sam. "How can he give you titles clear, if, as you claim, he has no right to the land himself?"

"Then ther Government must do et, that's all."

"The Government has already awarded it to one party; it cannot give it the second time."

The mayor looked at the sport keenly.

"I find you are taking sides with Mr. Bristol pretty strongly," he observed.

"Only because I believe that side to be in the right, sir," was the answer. "It is nothing to me."

"Well," one man bellowed out, "we reckons we ar' the people, and that we kin make our own laws hyer. This camp don't b'long to one man, but to all of us, and we ar' goin' to have it, right or wrong. See?"

"Yes, sir, I see," responded the mayor; "but, I fail to see it in just that light. Maybe you will see it differently, by and by."

The mayor went out and to the hotel. There he found Joe Garry, the seedy lawyer, and some others looking at the manifesto the council had posted.

At the bottom of it were these words:

"Buy out, sell out, or get out.
DEADWOOD DICK, JR."

Before the next morning the same words and the same signature had been appended to every poster in the camp.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRETTY SCHOOLMARM.

ONE of the fairest girls at Bristol City was Claudia Steyger.

Every lassie has her laddie, 't is said, and

the little schoolmarm was no exception to that rule.

She had a lover in Huber Stempler, a prosperous young business man of the place, a fellow of good looks, with fair hair, blue eyes, and a light mustache.

Then, again, the course of true love seldom runs smoothly, according to the old saw, and this, like the other, was proved in the present instance. Stempler had a rival for the hand of his lassie.

The mentioned rival was one Lucius Blackwall, a portly man of middle age who had now been some weeks in the camp. He was a well-dressed man, and one who had the appearance of being a gentleman of means. Stempler was the favored suitor, but Blackwall was persistent.

And this state of affairs, naturally, made it anything but pleasant for the little lady whose business it was to teach the young ideas of the camp how to shoot, as the saying has it.

Stempler was on his way to his place of business, on this morning, when his rival came up with him and stopped him.

"A word with you, sir," he said.

"Well?" Huber demanded.

"You and I are rivals, as you are aware."

"We ought not to be, now, sir," the cold rejoinder.

"And why not?"

"Because Miss Steyger is now my promised wife, sir."

"What! Curse you, do you mean to tell me that you have won her promise—that you are engaged?"

"I do, sir; and, while I am about it, I will tell you more than that. If you trouble her any further with your attentions you shall be made to answer for it to me. Do you understand?"

"I take in your meaning; and, I shall have to be answerable to you, for it is my intention to make that lady my wife in spite of you and everything else. And now, sir, if you want to settle this matter, you know where to find me. Weapons of any kind will suit me."

With that he turned away and entered the hotel.

Stempler looked after him for a moment, then continued on his way to his place of business.

"Curse the man!" he muttered to himself.

"I cannot understand him. He came here a stranger, only a little while ago, and seemed to fall in love with Claudia at once. I am half inclined to think there must be something back of it all, and yet she had never seen him before in her life. Well, I will stand no nonsense from him, and he wants to understand it so."

The first stage to the camp on this same morning brought with it some new-comers to the little city.

This was nothing unusual, since strangers were coming and going continually, but these, or some of them, were personages who are to figure in our romance.

Let us mention first a man and a woman, rather sportishly dressed, and not very far along on the highway whose mile-posts are years, and who at first were taken to be man and wife, but were not.

Then there was another, a tall, dark man of thirty-five, at a guess, neatly dressed in the finest black, the good effect of which, however, was greatly marred by a too lavish display of diamonds. That he was a professional gambler did not need to be told. It could be read at sight.

The two first mentioned entered the hotel at once, but the latter took a look around him before doing so.

"So, this is Deadwood Dick's home base, is it?" he observed.

"That's what et's called, sometimes," a man near him made response.

"And can you tell me whether Deadwood Dick is here now or not, my good man?"

"Wull, as to that, I can't say fer sure. Some think he is hyer, and some ar' of mind he ain't."

"How is that?"

"Nobody is sure about et. If he is hyer, he is in disguise, and when Deadwood Dick takes on a disguise in earnest it puzzles his own wife ter know him. That's ther way et is."

"Well, I wanted to see him, that was all, and hoped I should find him at home on my arrival. But, it does not matter; I can wait till he comes."

With that he walked leisurely to the hotel and entered.

The man who had previously entered with the woman supposedly his wife, was just in the act of registering.

He set down the names of himself and companion thus:

"HENRY DARCY, } *Denver.*
"DAISY DARCY, }

"You say you want two rooms?" asked Jim, the clerk. "Ain't you man and wife, then?"

"Yes, two rooms. We are brother and sister."

"Oh! I see."

The matter was speedily arranged, and as the couple stepped back from the desk the gambler sport took up the pen.

He asked some questions about the rates for a few weeks, and having been satisfied, put down his name as—

"HYDE LESTER, *Chicago.*"

"I was making some inquiries outside about Deadwood Dick," he said as he laid down his pen. "Can you tell me anything about him?"

"According to what you want to know," the clerk answered.

"Well, I want to know where he is now."

"That is uncertain."

"Then he is not in town?"

"It is thought he is, but no one is sure about it."

"What reason could he have for being here, in his own stronghold, in a disguise?"

Thereupon Jim gave the man a brief account of the trouble the camp was experiencing just at that time.

"Well, that makes it look a little different; still one would think a man of Deadwood Dick's caliber would face the music openly."

"Don't make any mistake about him," the clerk defended. "If he is here in disguise he has some plan to carry out, and sooner or later there will be a disclosure that will wake us all up."

"Lor' Jerusha, yes!" chimed in Old Avalanche, who was standing near. "That is the sort o' critter Deadwood Dicky is, every time. Great hambone o' demoralizin' demolishun! He is a terror on ten wheels, when ye wake him up, is Dicky; and I reckon he ain't asleep now."

"May I inquire who *you* are, sir?" the new-comer asked, looking at the old man in a measure of amazement.

"I don't know of nothin' ter forbid et," was the response. "I am best knowed as Old Avalanche, and I was ther guardian angel of ther first Deadwood Dick, ther same as I'm ther modern mascot to ther second. I'm all that's left of the oncet famous Triangle of tremenjus Injun disaster—ther only remainin' corner. With Prudence Cordeliar, my mule, and Florence Night in a gale, my goat, I was a reg'lar devastatin' Injun eppydemick!"

"I believe I have heard of you. So, you are still with Deadwood Dick, eh?"

"Yes; but now I'm helpless on his bounty, for my day o' usefulness has about drawed to a close, I guess."

"Nonsense!" cried the clerk. "And, you had better not let Deadwood Dick hear you say that, either, or he will call you to account for it."

"That's so, Jimmie, that's so; but, great

hambone what proved devastatin' destruction to ther Danites in ther days o' despairatin' devouratashun in Egypt, ain't et so?"

The clerk laughed, and the stranger surveyed the old man critically and turned away.

"Will ye jest 'low me a word wi' you, mister?" spoke a voice.

The gambler sport turned to face the speaker, who was none other than Brownlow Jugg.

"Certainly, my man," the gambler sport gave permit. "But, first, who and what are you? You are a stranger to me."

"Jim, interdoose me, will ye?" the Little Brown Jugg requested.

The clerk complied, and the new-comer laughed heartily.

"Pardon my laughing, Mr. Jugg," he apologized, "but I could not help it. I was struck by that nickname of yours."

"Oh, that's all right, I kin stand et; but, did I hear you askin' 'bout Deadwood Dick?"

"It is quite likely that you did sir. Do you know where he is?"

"You bet. Come right hyer to ther door an' I'll show him to ye."

The gambler sport stepped to the door, and the Little Brown Jugg pointed out Lawyer Burr, who was standing before the Monte Carlo.

"How do you know it is he?"

Mr. Jugg told what had taken place between himself and Mr. Burr, and said further that he had been watching the movements of the lawyer since, and felt sure of his ground.

"Well, I'll go and speak to him, anyhow," said Lester, and leaving Mr. Jugg there he strolled over to where the seedy lawyer stood.

"Do I mistake, sir, in taking you to be Deadwood Dick?" he asked.

"You do, sir; you make the biggest mistake of your life," was the easy answer.

"But you have just been pointed out to me as Deadwood Dick."

"By that Jack there on the hotel piazza?"

"Well, yes."

"I doubled him up on the floor last night, for his mistake, and I may have to do it again."

"And you insist that you are not Deadwood Dick, do you?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Then who are you?"

"Who are you, first?"

"I am Hyde Lester, of Chicago."

"Well, I am Barrington Burr, a lawyer. That is to say, I was a lawyer, but now I'm nothing in particular, and not particular what I am. I live only to drink, and if you have got the price of a drink about you now, and want to talk to me, you wil have to wet my whistle. See?"

"One question, first."

"Well, what is it?"

"Did you ever hear of Burk Dorris?"

The question was asked in a low tone, and the man looked keenly into the eyes of the seedy lawyer as he put it.

"I never did, sir," was the answer.

"Well, you are either telling the truth, or you are Deadwood Dick for a fact, as nervy as ever."

"I have told you the truth."

"Do you swear that you are not Deadwood Dick?"

"Yes, I'll take my oath to it, if that will do. I'm getting tired of this joke."

"Well, then, can you point Deadwood Dick out to me?"

"I can't, sir; never saw him in my life, to know him."

"And this whisker, I suppose, is all your own, is it not?"

As he made that inquiry he laid hold upon the seedy lawyer's throat whiskers, to pull them.

The lawyer gave a yell that drew attention, and the next moment had laid hold upon the sleek sport and landed him half-way across the road.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SLIPPERY SPORT'S NIP.

"THERE!" the seedy lawyer yelled. "Take that, you confounded black sheep of Satan's flock, you! I am not Deadwood Dick, but by the immortal shades of Blackstone I think I'm man enough for you!"

The spectators laughed and cheered.

"Curse you!" the sleek gambler sport cried, as he gathered himself up out of the dust. "I will fix you for that, whoever you are!"

He reached for a pistol, as he got upon his feet, but just then another actor appeared upon the scene to take part in the play, which was getting lively for a small performance.

The new player was Soapstone Sam, the Slippery Sport, who came out of the saloon just in time to step between the seedy lawyer and his enraged antagonist, and as he did so he presented a revolver, ordering the gambler sport to desist.

The latter obeyed the command, pale with rage.

The seedy lawyer gazed upon his champion with a look of keenest satisfaction on his face.

"Do you mean to take this thing up?" Lester demanded.

"Not at all, sir," Soapstone Sam made answer. "But, I will not see this man shot down in cold blood."

"I can fight my own battles, good friend," spoke up the lawyer, "if it is with nature's weapons; but, you have done me a good turn, for I am not armed."

"I thought you were rather slow about getting out your gun, if you were, so I chipped in for you. And, now that I'm in it, I'll see you through. That is Soapstone Sam's way."

Quite a crowd had gathered around them now, and conspicuous in it were Captain Jack and the Little Brown Jugg.

"For which I'm greatly obliged," the seedy lawyer gratefully acknowledged. "Are you satisfied, sir," to Lester, "that I am not Deadwood Dick?"

"On the contrary, I am all the more convinced that you *are* he. What is the use of your denying it? No one but Dick Bristol could have tossed me in the way you did. That was proof enough."

"That's what we all say," cried Mr. Jugg.

"It seems folly to deny your identity longer," added Stonecut.

"You are wrong, all wrong," insisted Mr. Burr. "I only wish the real Deadwood Dick would come and relieve me of this burden."

"It looks to me as though there might be a grain of fear in this," spoke up a new voice. The speaker was Lucius Blackwall.

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Burr.

"That you are afraid to appear in your true colors just at this time, and so are trying to bluff these men down."

"Which proves how little *you* know about Deadwood Dick," another new voice opposed.

The second speaker was Huber Stempler. "And perhaps you do," Blackwall hotly retorted.

"I claim to know him well enough by sight, sir, to feel sure this lawyer is not he," the younger man fired back.

"Sir, give me your hand," cried Mr. Burr, reaching out and taking it anyhow. "You are the first man who has displayed any horse sense in the matter yet, and I must honor you."

"Then I demand to know *who* you are," cried the gambler sport, trying to remove the dust from his garments.

"And which I have told a hundred times," asseverated the lawyer.

"And which we know to be a lie—"

"Have a care!" Mr. Burr warned. "I'm a Burr by name and a burr by nature. The quickest way to tame me is to say *drink*. By the way, *did* anybody ask me to drink?"

At that the roughs in the crowd laughed.

"And here is further proof that the man speaks the truth," declared Stempler. "We all know that Deadwood Dick does *not* drink, while this man does."

"Is that so?" cried the seedy lawyer. "Is that the fact? Don't Deadwood Dick drink? Then it will be the easiest thing in the world for me to prove false what you would force upon me! If any one will set them up I will dispose of a couple of horns with promptest dispatch. What say?"

The roughs laughed louder, and some of them offered to join with the lawyer in the proof act.

"That is no proof at all," growled Captain Jack. "Deadwood Dick could drink as well as the next one, if it would serve his purpose or aid his disguise."

"You do not know the man," Stempler insisted. "Deadwood Dick is a man who does not change with every wind that blows. He does not drink, and holds that, now, to be one of his life principles."

"Well, we may as well drop the matter, I suppose," the gambler-sport growled. "I am not convinced, spite of your argument; and, I'll meet you again, Mr. Burr, if my suspicion is not removed. Then we shall see who is the better man. And for you, sir," to Soapstone Sam, "take care not to cross me another time."

"I hope I shall not have occasion to do so, certainly," was the quiet and easy response.

The gambler went off to the hotel, and the crowd gradually broke up.

When Huber Stempler returned to his store he found Miss Steyger there awaiting him.

She was a pretty girl, as has been said; about twenty years of age, with a pair of flashing black eyes full of intelligent fire.

"Been running to see a fight, have you, sir?" she chided, playfully. "I mean to teach you better morals, when once you come under my care. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

And then she laughed merrily.

"Your lightest wish shall be my law, when I am yours and you are mine," the lover declared gallantly. "That is, if we ever realize that happiness."

The girl's manner changed instantly, at that, and a look of alarm came upon her sweet, young face.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Blackwall warned me this morning that he means to have you himself, by fair means or otherwise."

"I am afraid of that man, Huber," the girl cried, her face growing pale. "I tremble at thought of him. You must protect me against him."

"Which I fully intend to do, if I am able. He has as good as challenged me to fight—"

"Heavens! You must not think of doing that! If he does not leave me alone we can have him arrested, and my friends here will make short work of getting him out of the place."

"That might do, but I am afraid of treachery. You must take good care to keep out of his reach. Did you want to see me, dear?"

"Yes; I wanted to ask you what you think of the trouble as it is to-day?"

"It is no better, that is sure, Claudia. If anything, it is growing worse, for some of the hot-headed ones talk about seizing the whole camp and running it to suit themselves."

"Do you think they dare do that?"

"A mob dares to do anything, dearest."

"But, they could not succeed, could they?"

"They seem to have grown stronger, and no telling what would be the outcome."

"And with Mr. Bristol away, it would be serious enough anyhow. But, I hear it rumored that he is here."

"It was thought that the drunken lawyer who came yesterday is he, in disguise, but I am convinced to the contrary. And yet it seems certain that he is here, too."

"Then why does he not show himself?"

"He must have good reason for not doing so. If here, he will take things in hand all in good time, never fear."

"And if he is not here—"

"Then everything rests upon Mayor Carleton and the city council."

"And they have doubled the police force, which is one good indication that they are not idle."

"They are up and doing, be sure of that."

"Well, I am convinced, Huber, that Deadwood Dick is *not* here, no matter what the opinion is."

"That so?"

"Yes."

"What is your reason?"

"Well, this: if he came, would not Mrs. Bristol be with him? And if she had come, would she not go at once, secretly if she could not do so openly, to see her boy? Her mother's heart would demand it of her."

"Can you be sure she has *not* done so?"

"I have been to the house, and the nurse and the servants declare they have not seen her."

"Which seems pretty good proof that she, at any rate, has not returned to the city, according to your way of looking at it. But, we cannot be sure of anything, when they are concerned."

"Then the question is, has Dick come without her?"

"Only time can answer that."

"Well, I do hope they are both here, for I am almost sick with my fears and dread."

"Pshaw! you must not let it take hold upon you so, little one."

"I cannot help it. And, do you know, I shall be all alone in the house this night?"

"Alone?"

"Yes; for father will be out on the armed force."

"Ha! that will never do. You must spend the night somewhere else, or have some one with you."

"But, where am I to go?"

"There are a hundred places where you can go. Do not let that worry you for a moment. Go home, now, and sing away your dull spirits. All will come out well, loved one."

"Then you want to get rid of me?"

"Oh! you know better than that; but, I did not want to detain you, you know. Had you something further to tell me?"

"Yes, now that it has been brought to mind by what you said about Blackwall, I have. I saw him and Jackson Stonecut talking together this morning, early, out by the mill."

"Proof, then, that they are not strangers to each other. I'll let the mayor know of this."

"Yes, I think I would, Huber."

The lovers held some further conversation, and then parted, the young lady returning home, her heart none the lighter for her visit to the store.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK IS HEARD FROM.

THE man and woman who had come by the stage, the Darceys, had not kept their business at Bristol City long a secret.

Posters were now up, announcing a performance in the Monte Carlo that evening, a performance in which singing was to be the leading feature, though the man was billed to do some character changes.

Such affairs were of quite frequent occurrence at the young city, and were always well patronized.

There was no reason to think this one would be any exception to the rule, even though there was such excitement in the camp over other matters.

It was after supper, during that hour of the evening when there seems nothing for anybody to do, the hour between six-thirty and seven-thirty, and Soapstone Sam was sitting in the bar-room of the Grand Pacific.

Presently he was joined by Jackson Stonecut.

"Killing time?" Captain Jack asked.

"Trying to," was the answer.

"Going to see the performance, I suppose?"

"If nothing better turns up to claim my attention, sir."

"Then are you on the lookout for good things?"

"I am on the make, if that is what you mean. I'm in the world to gather my fortune where and how I can."

"You are a gentleman sport, I take it, trying to get the living the world owes you without working very hard for it."

"I guess you are more than half right."

"What luck have you had?"

"Not the best, so far."

"And neither have I. The way seems to be opening brighter now, however."

"Then you have something in view?"

"Yes."

"Well, I wish you luck in it, if that will do you any good, or will help it along any."

"Your wishes and your actions don't work together, or luck might be better for both of us. But, I see you do not catch on to what I am getting at."

"You are right; I don't."

"And I don't know whether I should explain or not."

"Why?"

"Can I trust you?"

"Well, that is for you to determine."

"See here, if I show you a good thing, Sport, will you go into it, if there is money in it?"

"I might be tempted to do so."

"Well, I have just such a thing on hand."

"What is it?"

"First let me ask what you know about Deadwood Dick."

"Why, just about as much as you do, I suppose. I have heard a good deal about him here."

"Do you think that lawyer is he?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Well, because the proof seems strongest the other way; at any rate, it seems so to me."

"You seem to have a friendly feeling for Deadwood Dick."

"Why so?"

"Well, you have taken his side in the argument that's on here about the ownership of this pocket."

"Because it seems to me he is in the right."

"Well, supposing he is, ought we to stop for that with such a fortune at stake as is at stake here?"

"If that is your game, of course you want to shut your eyes to the right and the wrong of it, and go in to win. Rascals don't stop to weigh trifles that come up in their way."

"Rascals, eh?"

"That was the word I used."

"And it applies to me?"

"Yes, I guess it does, if this is your lay."

"Well, it pays to be the rascal sometimes, you know. It is going to pay big here."

"Why do you show *me* your hand?"

"We want to get as many on our side as possible."

"Ha! that is it, eh?"

"Yes."

"And this is an invitation to come in with you, then?"

"If you want to; we'll make room for you. We are going to take the camp and divide it among ourselves."

"Well, that's cool, I must say."

"And we need cool men to carry it out; you seem to be that sort."

"Don't you think it's a pretty big undertaking?"

"Yes, if it isn't managed right."

"What do you call managing it right?"

"Taking care of number one, after the thing is done."

"Then you wouldn't stay here and try to hold it?"

"Well, hardly. All we want at first, you see, is to get a majority of the citizens on our side—"

He stopped short.

"What's the matter?"

"I think I've told you too much already."

"You are just getting me interested in your scheme, sir."

"Would you like to take a share in it? The more the merrier, and there is plenty to go around."

"See here," and the sport drew his chair nearer and spoke in lower tones, "I take it you are at the head of this business; are you not?"

"No, we have no head; it is every man for himself."

"Oh, I know better than that."

"Well, what do you suspect, then?"

"I don't suspect, I know; there is some one at the head of the scheme."

"And you think I'm the man?"

"I only ask you if you are."

"Have you any objection to telling just who and what you are, Sport?"

"Not the least, sir; I am called Soapstone Sam, and sometimes I am called the Slippery Sport."

"Slippery Sport, eh? That's not bad."

"You see, when they think they have got me, that is the time they find they haven't got me at all. I'm too slippery for them, you see."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, since you have disclosed your hand pretty plainly I need not be afraid to do the same."

"Assuredly not."

"I refer to the detectives, and such."

"Ha! then you have had to do with them, have you?"

"Yes."

"Ever had this Deadwood Dick after you?"

"I prefer not to talk about that, since I do not know you further than you have seen fit to reveal yourself to me."

"Are you Deadwood Dick's friend?"

"You ought to be able to judge of that, after what has passed between us. I have been his friend, and have also been his worst enemy."

"And which are you now?"

"Both."

"You talk in riddles."

"Maybe I do, but I cannot explain more fully now."

"Well, what do you say about going into this thing with us?"

"I can't say till I have a full understanding of the whole matter."

"What do you call a full understanding?"

"Well, I must know who is at the head of the movement, and just what I will make out of it if I do go in."

"I see you are not opposed to it, if the game is all straight and you are likely to come out safe. I will see about the matter and let you know later."

"All right; and in the mean time be mum about it."

"Oh, of course."

And with that they parted company for the time being.

It was not ten minutes later when Billy Bucket entered the office of the mayor,

Old Avalanche was there, and he was greatly excited over something that had taken place.

"I wouldn't 'a' thought et," he cried.

"Great hambone what raised dire calamity in ther camp of ther dozen tribes in ther days o' famine! But et's past all belief, ter think ther sport is that sort."

"What sport?" demanded Billy, quickly.

"What sort?"

"Why, Billy," Carleton explained, "we have just got a communication from Mr. Bristol, and he tells us to arrest Soapstone Sam as a dangerous man."

"And he's right, too," Billy cried. "He is a bad egg. I have just come to tell you that."

"What do you know about him?"

"I have just heard a talk between him and that rascal Stonecut."

"There is no doubt about it, that is sure, for this is Deadwood Dick's writing plain enough. But, what did you hear?"

"Why, Soapstone Sam is about going over to their side, and they are going to capture the whole camp and divide it up to suit themselves, and he is to have his share in it."

"Then we'll nip his game in the bud, that is all."

"What does the boss say?"

"Here is his note."

Billy took the missive and read as follows:

"CARLETON:—

"You had better arrest Soapstone Sam at once as a dangerous man, and lock him up for trial. I am here, but for the present I will remain unknown to you. Take the man when off his guard, or he may give you trouble. Have your police and armed men where they can respond to a quick call at any hour to-night."

DEADWOOD DICK, JR."

CHAPTER IX.

OMINOUS SHADOWS.

"GREAT confistigated old hambone what made soup fer Jupel!" cried Old Avalanche, "but I would jest like ter know who my Dicky boy is. I have puzzled this hyer old head of mine all day over ther question, and now I'm more puzzled than ever."

"Then you had an idea it was as Soapstone Sam he was masquerading?" suggested Mayor Carleton.

"Yes, I own I did have a sneakin' suspicion that 'ar way," the old man admitted. "But, Lor' Jerusha! this hyer knocks that idee higher than a cocked hat. Great hambone what derailed ther juggernaut o' judgement! but I'll be glad when this terrible strain is taken off my mind."

"And it is our business, all together, from ther mayor down, ter take it off, too," suggested Johnny Smile.

"Yas, and we must be up and doin' somethin'," the old man cried. "Joe, you must see to ther perlice, and I'll tend to havin' ther mine-boys on hand ter do duty, same as Dicky has said."

"You have taken the words out of my mouth, old fellow," said the mayor. "I was just going to give directions to that effect, so you see we were both of one mind. Yes, see to that, you and Joe, and let each man be ready to do his part when the emergency comes. There may be trouble to-night, according to what Mr. Bristol has said."

Just then another man came into the office.

He was one of the mayor's aides, so to call him, and seemed to be excited.

It could be seen that he had been running, for he was panting, and he appeared eager to state his errand.

"Hillo!" the old scout greeted. "What's ther matter wi' you?"

"I have got a note here for the mayor," the man panted, offering a paper to Carleton as he spoke.

"Whar did ye git et?"

"That's ther queerest part of it, old man."

"Wull, tell us. Great hambone, don't

keep us dyin' wi' any more mystery 'n we've got a'ready."

"Soon told, pard. A couple o' men laid hold onto us in the dark behind the stables jest now, and one of 'em put this note into my hand and told me to bring et hyer, straight."

"An' who was they?"

"I give et up. They didn't do me no harm, but I was like a kid in their grip, I'm tellin' ye."

"It was Deadwood Dick again," announced Carleton.

"Ther doose!" cried the old scout.

"Do ye know, I thought it was," declared the man who had brought the message.

"He had the strength of a giant."

The mayor had read the missive, and so learned the truth of it.

"What does he say?" asked Billy Bucket.

"He gives further directions," the mayor answered.

And then he read the note aloud, in a low tone, as follows:

"CARLETON:—

"Caution the boys to use more care in their work, although I have but little fault to find with them. And the men must use more care. You must be more secret, all of you. Make the arrest of Soapstone Sam at the Monte Carlo about the time the play is over, and at the same time make a prisoner of Captain Jack. These are two to be feared. Lock them in separate cells."

DEADWOOD DICK, JR."

"That's him. That's ther ginooine Richard o' Deadwood!" cried the old scout.

"I kin reckernize him by the tone of his handwrite. By ther great horniferated old hambone what greased ther griddle fer Joner in ther days o' tribbyleshan! but I'm glad ter know fer sure that he has got his hand at the masheen. Now you kin jest bet on't that somethin' is goin' ter be done."

"Yes, the beginning of the end is at hand, I feel it," agreed the mayor. "I have had to acknowledge to myself my incapacity for handling the situation, and I am glad Mr. Bristol is on hand. Now, for the plan for making these arrests. I think I'll have four of our best policemen do it, two to each man, and there will hardly be any chance for a failure."

"That will be the way to do it," approved Joe Garry. "Then, to make matters doubly sure, some of the rest of us kin be close at hand, ready to chip in our help if needed."

"Excellent; that will do finely. And, that is all for the present. I will see that my men are on hand for the service."

There was further talk but presently the little band separated.

By that time the Monte Carlo was being filled, and the time for the expected performance was drawing near.

The other matter, the revolt against Deadwood Dick's proprietorship in the camp, was for the time being less talked of than it had been; it appeared to be sleeping.

When the hour for the performance came the saloon was filled.

There was a stage in the saloon, as has perhaps been explained in a previous story.

To that stage was a curtain, with all necessary fixings that went to the making up of a first-class little playhouse of the sort.

The audience was eager for the performance to begin, and when the time had gone a little over the hour announced there was great stamping and calling for the curtain to rise.

Presently a little bell tapped, and the curtain rolled up to place.

There were the Darcys, as an Irish lad and maiden, and they favored the audience with a very lively and taking song.

This was well received, and they were called out again and again.

Then followed other songs, singly and in duets, and some dancing on the part of the man. The girl herself evidently did not dance. And each song and dance seemed to please even better than the preceding one.

It was declared to be about as good a performance of the kind as Bristol City had ever witnessed.

"What do you think of it?" asked Captain Jack of Soapstone Sam.

The two were seated together, about in the center of the hall, near the middle aisle as the seats were arranged.

"It is about as good as you can see anywhere," was the response.

"Yes, I think so myself. And the crowd seems determined to have more of it, even though that was the last piece."

"You are right; they seem loth to let go."

Some men were slowly making their way forward to where the two men sat.

The applause was so loud and so long, that the couple had to appear on the stage once more, and the woman held up her hand to enjoin silence.

The uproar ceased at once.

"Gentlemen," she said, pleasantly, "I believe you would tire us out completely, were you to have your way. We are glad, of course, to be so warmly received, and we certainly want to please you. To give you the full worth of your money, I will give an exhibition of my powers of second sight, so to call it, and that must suffice you for this evening."

A cheer greeted her words.

With a bow, then, the girl retired from the stage, while her brother proceeded to arrange it for the further performance.

He brought forth a tripod, upon the top of which was a glossy black bowl of considerable size, under which he lighted a pan of alcohol, which blazed up with a ghostly glare.

That done, he motioned for the lady to reappear.

She came forth, completely covered with a robe of dull, heavy black, nothing of her person being visible save the eyes, the flash of which could be occasionally caught through the holes in the head-piece of the funeral-like attire, and took her position behind the tripod.

"This performance, gentlemen," spoke the brother, then, "is one which never fails to create intense interest. You must understand, at the start, that we are not to be held responsible for any disclosures that may be made. You will ask questions, and my sister will read the answers as they appear to her in the magic bowl. You are now free to ask what you will, or you may leave it to the seer to reveal whatever the magic bowl may show her."

Many showed by their actions that they were eager for such a performance, but there were others who showed as plainly they were not so eager.

There was silence for a few moments, when Jackson Stonecut spoke up.

"Let the lady say whether or not Deadwood Dick is in this camp at this time," he requested.

The young woman made some passes over the bowl with her cloaked arms, after which she stood silent, gazing down into it with earnest attention.

"Yes, Deadwood Dick is in this place to-night," she finally spoke.

"Is he in this room?" Stonecut further asked.

"Yes, he is in this room, sir."

"That is very good. Now, can you tell us who he is?"

"He is—is—is— It is impossible for me to answer that, sir. A stronger will than mine is brought to bear, and the picture fades."

"Proof enough that the devil detective is here!" cried out the Little Brown Jugg. "His mind is ther strongest in ther camp, I'm bettin'."

"You are very likely right," said the young man on the stage. "Anyhow, some one controls my sister so that she cannot

answer the question. Will you ask another? Any one is at liberty to speak out."

"By ther great old rustycated hambone what gorged ther gullick of Joner in ther seven fat years!" cried Old Avalanche. "I'll try my hand at askin' a poser of ther purty posey. Gal, kin ye tell me who is ther head of this hyer ornery uprisin' 'g'inst Deadwood Dicky?"

Passes were made over the bowl again, and the answer was quickly given.

"The man is one Burk Dorris, sir."

"Lor' Jerusha!" cried Avalanche, "but that was done quick! I wonder ef she could do et again like that?"

"Might I be permitted to ask a question?" here spoke up Hyde Lester, the gambler sport.

"Any one is at liberty to do so," he was told.

"Well, I have come to this camp with the intention of playing against some of your best card-sharps. Now, will the lady kindly tell me whether I am to make or break here? Perhaps her reply will determine my staying or not."

More passes were made over the bowl, slowly, and after some moments the reply was made.

"Fortune is against the gentleman," was the answer of the seer. "If he ventures he is sure to lose. He had better drop his game and go away as he came. Further, I see danger ahead for him here, if he remains. A blow is about to fall under which many will be crushed."

"That looks like a straight tip," the gambler sport remarked, smiling.

"I see danger—danger ahead!" the young woman went on, excitedly. "I see here a pretty girl; she has a lover. But, their happiness is resting upon a treacherous volcano. A rival is against the lover, and the lady must flee from danger, throwing herself upon the care of tried and true friends. There is danger for her this night. A dark plot is at work. Her friends must rally to her protection. Save her, men of Bristol City; save—"

"See hyer," interrupted Old Avalanche, "who is that 'ar gal?"

"The name I see, sir, is Claudia Steyger."

CHAPTER X.

THE NIGHT OF DREAD.

WHAT more the woman might have revealed would never be known, for just then something happened to draw all attention away from the stage.

The men who had been making their way forward to where Soapstone Sam and Captain Jack were seated had now reached them, and were about making the arrest—or an effort in that direction.

"What means this?" cried Soapstone Sam, leaping to his feet.

"It means that you two are our prisoners," was the grim answer, "and that you are dead men if you resist!"

"Your prisoners?" echoed Captain Jack.

"Yes, our prisoners. Hands up, or death to you both!"

"But, what is the charge?" asked the Slippery Sport, calmly, as he obeyed the command.

"The charge is, that you are at the bottom of this unlawful uprising against the loyal citizens of this city, and we are going to put you where you can't do any more harm than you have done already."

"Where is your proof?" demanded Stonecut.

"The proof will probably be forthcoming at your trial to-morrow," the chief of the four gave answer.

Meantime their hands had been ordered up, as shown; an order obeyed, since there did not appear to be any chance for the two men to resist successfully.

All attention having been removed from

the stage, the curtain had been run down and the performance there was done. There was nothing to divide the attention of the crowd.

"What are you going to do with us?" asked Soapstone Sam.

"We are going to lock you up in the jail."

"You are, eh? Well, I'll bet you don't keep me there long, unless it is a tighter box than I take it to be."

"You will find it tight enough, I guess."

"I am called the Slippery Sport, and you will discover that I am pretty hard to hold. You have the best of me just now, however, as I have to admit."

"We will hold you, I think."

To this time the crowd had taken no part in the matter.

The prisoners had been secured, their hands being tied in front of them, and the police were ready to take them out.

Now, however, the crowd took action, or a part of it did, for the Little Brown Jugg shouted:

"See hyer, feller cits, ar' we going ter see this 'rest made right hyer under our noses?"

"No! No!" came from a dozen different parts of the room.

"Great hambone what discombobberated ther diaframm of Joner!" shouted Old Avalanche, who, with a dozen or more of Deadwood Dick's allies, was near the policemen and the prisoners; "I reckon as how thar is two sides to this hyar question, ther same as thar is to every other one. Hyer's ther relic of a oncet tremenjous tornader of devastatin' demolishun what says et is goin' ter be allowed!"

"You shut up, you old fossil!"

"Lor' Jerusha! You tell me to shut up? By ther rip-roarin' cyclone of devastatin' calamities! you will find that I'm a tough snag ter run up 'gainst, even ef I am old and withered. I say et goes, and I guess thar's enough loyal men left in ther camp ter see that et does go. By ther great hambone what disjinted ther gullick of Joner! ther first man what interferes with these p'lice in the 'charge of their dooty will hear somethin' drop, and don't ye forget that!"

"Better go slow, boys," warned Joe Garry. "There will be blood on the floor if any man starts a fight here."

"The man who begins trouble will be put under arrest," warned Mayor Carleton, boldly.

"What ar' we comin' to?" cried the Little Brown Jugg. "I want to know how long Deadwood Dick has been the Seezer of Rushy! Have we got ter bow ther knee to him, an' take off our hats when his name is mentioned?"

"You are talking through your hat, old man," cried Billy Bucket. "You have never been asked to do anything of the kind, have you? Deadwood Dick is the whitest sport that ever stood in two boots, and don't you forget it. It will be a sorry day for a good many here if he sells out his rights."

"You bet it will," added Johnny Smile.

The policemen were moving toward the doors with their prisoners all the time, and it looked as if they would get away with them.

The Little Brown Jugg tried to excite the rough element to a fight for their release, but the judgment of the level-headed ones prevailed, and the prisoners were taken safely out.

Just outside the door a dozen policemen and deputies were in waiting, and the prisoners were speedily locked in the jail, in separate cells.

It was a hard blow against the little rebellion, for there was no acknowledged leader among them, unless it fell to the Little Brown Jugg.

When the men had been safely lodged in the "calaboose," and an extra guard had been posted, Mayor Carleton returned to his office, some of the others with him.

"Thar, by ther great hambone!" cried Old Avalanche, "so fur so good, anyhow! I'll bet ther fellers don't git out of thar."

"And the power of the outbreak is just so much weakened," assumed the mayor.

"The police are all on duty, and ready for work at a moment's notice," reported Joe Garry.

"Yas, and ther men of ther mines are all armed, and a signal will fetch 'em out in a body in jest one minute," the old scout added. "Et seems ter me we have ther best hand."

"It is to be hoped we have," the mayor remarked. "There will be no sleep for any of us this night."

"You ar' right."

"But, I think I'll put out the lights here, and we'll remain on guard in the dark."

"A mighty good idea," cried Billy Bucket. "I don't believe some of these crazy ones would stop any short of murder."

"And we want to get in the first fire, when it comes to a fight," Johnny Smile declared. "I was in the last scrimmage of this kind we had, and that was a bloodless victory, almost. Wish I could doctor their guns again for 'em."

"Not likely that you will get the chance this time, Johnny," remarked Garry. "This is a different case, you know."

"Yes, and it will be the last case of the kind, you can bet. If Deadwood Dick wins this time he will put the iron heel on 'em; and if he loses, that will be the last of Bristol City."

"Great hambone, yes!" cried the old scout. "It will be either make or break with the noble Richard this time, you bet. But, he'll win, I feel et in my bones he will. He is layin' low fer tall game, he is, and you bet he'll make a big haul 'fore he is done."

"I think you are right, old man," said the mayor.

"Lor' Jerusha! I know I am right. When Deadwood Dicky puts his shoulder to ther wheel you kin jest bet on't thet somethin' has got to come! Rampagin' yarthquakes of cantankerous contammerashuns! but you will see ther blue smoke a-rollin' up from ther field o' battle 'fore long, I'm bettin'! Give Dicky half a show, and he'll come out on top."

Just then the door opened, and a man and woman entered quickly.

They were Huber Stempler and Claudia Steyger, as a glance served to show, and they were pale and excited.

"Heigho!" exclaimed the mayor. "What means this visit?"

"It means that I have brought Miss Steyger to you for protection this night, sir," answered Stempler.

"Protection?"

"Yes."

"Yes, indeed, for I dare not remain in my house till morning," the girl spoke up for herself.

"But, your father is there, is he not?" asked Carleton.

"No; he is one of the armed men on duty to-night, sir."

"Ha! so he is. Well, you may go to my house, Miss Steyger. Take her there, Huber; she will be safe there."

The door opened again, at that moment, and another man and woman entered the office.

These were the Darcys.

"You are the mayor, sir?" Henry Darcy asked.

"Yes, sir," Carleton answered.

"Well, my sister would have me bring her to you."

"What can I do for you, miss?"

"At my performance to-night, sir, I was impressed more than I ever was before. The danger to a certain lady of this camp is great

and I want to get your promise that you will protect her."

"Who is the lady?"

"Miss Steyger."

"Mel!" exclaimed that young lady.

"Then you are Miss Steyger?"

"Yes."

"Beware of Lucius Blackwall; he means you nothing but ill!"

"As I can well believe. I thank you for your kindness in warning me as you have done."

"Then you had already learned of what I said at the performance?"

"Yes, Mr. Stempler came to me at once, and together we have come to the mayor for protection."

"And you will give it, sir, of course?" to Carleton.

"Yes, I have promised it, miss. The young lady is going to my house to stay to-night."

"I am glad of that; but, even there may be danger for her. This night, sir, I fear, is to be a night of horrors. Upon you rests the responsibility of taking care of your people!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE SLIPPERY SPORT SLIPS.

WHILE they were talking, something came crashing through one of the windows.

The women gave vent to slight screams, while the men looked in the direction where some object had fallen to the floor with an echo of the first crash.

There, on the opposite side of the room, lay a shattered bottle, and out of it had come a sheet of paper, its own forced having caused it to unroll when freed from the confines of the bottle.

"Another warning," observed the mayor, and at once he stepped forward to take it up.

"They needn't send no more," cried Old Avalanche. "We ar' warn'd enough, and they kin jest bet that we ar' ready fer 'em. Great old pestiferous an' tarrantulated hambone what gorged ther gullick of Joner an' caused a rupture of his diarframm! won't we wake 'em up, though!"

Daisy Darcy laughed merrily at the old man's quaint remarks.

"What a droll old fellow you are!" she exclaimed.

"Yas, and I'm a good deal more turrible than I'm droll, too, you bet!" the old scout declared. "But, I'm nothin' now ter what I used ter be—hambone, no! Time was, when, with Prudence Cordeliar, my muel, and Florence Night-in-a-gale, my goat, I could 'a' taken this hyer hull diffikilty in hand myself, and jest everlastin'ly slewd ther—"

"From Deadwood Dick again!" exclaimed the mayor, interrupting.

"What!" cried Avalanche. "Frum ther noble Richard? Then let us hear what he has ter say this time. Lor' Jerusha! but I wish my Dicky boy would come out and make himself knowed to us! This hyer state o' suspense is killin' me by slow degrees. Hambone, yes! It 'minds me of ther time ther Injuns got me— But that 'ar will keep. What does he say, mayor?"

The mayor thereupon read the message aloud, but in a low tone.

It ran as follows.

"TO MAYOR AND MEN:—

"Be careful and watch. The danger may be very great, or it may be only slight; can't foresee the events of an hour. Take the women to my house, and leave some good men there to defend them and my little boy. The devils may try to steal him to hurt me, if they think of it. Burn this at once, so it cannot fall into other hands."

"DEADWOOD DICK, JR."

"Great sulphurous smokes o' perdishunary purgatorium!" cried Old Avalanche, in greatest excitement. "That's somethin' none of us thought of fer a minute! I think we'd better hustle ter git thar and see that every-

thing is safe. Hambone o' misery! what would become of us ef Little Dicky wur to git taken?"

"I have already taken steps against that," answered the mayor. "Five picked men are guarding the house."

"Bully fer you!" cried the old scout. "Dicky won't forget that, I bet."

"But we'd better carry out his other directions suggested Garry."

"Sure," cried Billy Bucket. "Let's get the women there soon's we can. What say?"

"That is what wants to be done," supported Johnny Smile. "Better let your wife and little ones go there, too, mayor. Have 'em all in one place."

"I agree with you. Will you two ladies go there?" turning to Miss Steyger and Daisy Darcy.

"If you will have me I shall be only too glad to go, sir," the latter hastened to say.

"I am afraid at the hotel, I freely admit."

"And you know without asking that I will go," said Claudia.

No further time was lost, then.

The mayor explained his plans in full, as he had them in mind, and the lights were put out.

That having been done, the women were taken from the building by the rear way, and in a little time all were safe in Deadwood Dick's cottage, including the mayor's family.

The night was a dark one, but the electric lights served to dispel the shadows from the main streets, at least.

The police, in double force, were doing their duty, and from general appearances it did not seem likely that anything out of the usual would happen that night.

That was not to be depended upon, however.

Gradually the lights were put out, and finally the camp was, to all intents and purposes, as far as could be seen, asleep.

That it was not asleep, however, need not be assured.

Men of both parties were armed and ready for fight at a moment's notice, and it needed only some unusual alarm to bring them out in force.

The mayor's office was dark, and the front door was locked, but the rear way was open, and by that way a dark shadow occasionally entered the building, as a spy came in to report.

Within were the mayor, Joe Garry, Old Avalanche and others, though each of these went out more or less, in turn.

Billy Bucket and Johnny Smile, however, were the principal detectives of the emergency.

Finally a man entered the office in haste.

It was one of the mayor's aides.

"The deuce is to pay, now," he hastily reported.

"What is it?" demanded the mayor, eagerly.

"Soapstone Sam has escaped from jail."

"Escaped! How?"

"That is what we would like to know. He is simply gone, and that is all there is to it."

"Pshaw! You do not mean to tell me that he has got away and no one knows how it happened, I hope. That is nonsense."

"That is jest it, all the same."

"Who made the discovery?"

"The jailer and the chief of the guards."

"Tell us all you know about it. If this is so, then the fellow is well named the Slippery Sport."

"You ar' right he is! But, that's about all thar is to tell, I guess. They went in to see that the prisoners were all right, and they found the sport's cell empty and him gone."

"And you don't know how he got out?"

"No one kin tell, for the doors was all found locked."

"Why, man, this is a nightmare you

have. You have been asleep and dreamed all this."

The fellow looked half-angry at this.

"Ef ye don't believe et, come an' see," he snapped. "I tell ye et's so, and there was a note in ther cell saying ther jail had not yet been built that could hold Soapstone Sam, ther Slippery Sport."

"Well, it must be true, of course, but it seemed so unreasonable that you cannot blame me for doubting."

"By the rip-roaring old hambone!" cried Old Avalanche. "I should say he was a slippery cuss, ef he has got out of thar that way. Lor' Jerusha! what is ter be looked for now? What is goin' ter happen next?"

"What about the other prisoner?" the mayor inquired.

"He is there, safe and sound."

"But the Slippery Sport is gone."

"Yes."

"Wonderful. It is something I cannot understand at all. I'm going to the jail at once to see about for it myself."

"Yas, and so am I," cried Old Avalanche. "Great hambone, ef that 'ar cuss is as slippery as that, no knowin' what manner o' mischief he will be slippin' into 'fore we know et."

They all would have gone, but the mayor forbade.

"So, he and two or three others went out, leaving the remainder there in the office."

On coming to the jail they found all the guardsmen talking together, discussing the wonderful event that had taken place.

The mayor called the jailer aside from the others and had a talk with him.

Whether he got any satisfaction or not, the others could not know, but from the puzzled look upon his face they judged not. "It beats all I ever heard of," he said. "I am amazed. There is only one thing to be done, and that is to make doubly sure the other prisoner does not get out, and then await further directions from Deadwood Dick."

While they were talking the seedy lawyer, Mr. Burr, came up.

"Is your mayor here, men?" he asked.

"Yes, I am here," the mayor answered for himself.

"I would like to talk with you a minute."

"Very well, sir."

"See hyer, Dicky," cried Old Avalanche. "I can't stand et no longer. Why don't ye come right out an' own up ter who ye be? That would take a big load off o' my mind; hambone, yes!"

"You are mistaken, old man," the seedy lawyer declared, earnestly.

"Lor' Jerusha! I can't be, *this time*."

"But, you are."

"Well, I s'pose I shall have ter own et, then, ef you say so: but, by ther cavaortin' cans o' dynamite demolishun I believe you ar' my Dicky, all ther same!"

"What has put that into your head again?"

"Two things. One is, that if you was jest what ye claim ter be, ye would be in bed at this late hour of ther night; and ther next, that yer voice sounded jest like Dicky's when ye spoke that 'ar time."

"Well, I want to assure you of one thing, and that is this: *I am not Deadwood Dick*."

"All right, then; that settles et."

The others smiled, for they, or most of them, were of the same mind as the old ranger himself.

The mayor and the seedy lawyer drew apart a little from the others.

"There is trouble ahead, sir," the lawyer averred.

"I am aware of it," the mayor answered.

"Do you know what it is?"

"Not in detail."

"I do, then. Deadwood Dick is going to be killed as soon as his identity is made known."

"The reason why he is so careful to keep

it hid, then, I suppose. But, he ought to let his friends know him, so that they might protect him."

"That need not matter so much, so long as you know where to look for the danger. Have one of your best and quickest men shadow that gambler sport, Hyde Lester, and be ready to foil him in anything he may attempt. I have heard enough to lead me to believe he is the foe of Deadwood Dick."

CHAPTER XII.

CHANGING LEADERS.

THE Grand Pacific Hotel did not close entirely at night.

It had a night clerk, who slept in the office, and a late comer could get in at any hour by simply waking the clerk.

The lights in the bar-room and office were kept burning low, and the belated traveler was sure to find a place of welcome if he proved a worthy personage.

The hour was late when the clerk in the office was roused out of his nap by a thump at the door.

Rising, he slipped his revolver into his hip pocket as a precautionary measure and opened to the applicant.

The person was a stranger, a man of rough beard and rougher boots, who stepped in as soon as the door swung back for him.

"Well?" asked the clerk.

"Have you a guest here by name of Lucius Blackwall?" the stranger asked.

"Yes, sir; there is such a person here."

"Well, I want to see him."

"I don't think you can, sir, at this late hour. Can't you wait till morning?"

"No; I must see him now. Call him up."

"Do you come as a friend?"

"Certainly. You call him up, and you will find it's all right."

"Well, who are you?"

"Never mind a name; just tell him a man wants to see him on business that is important."

"All right, then, since you insist upon it; but, I'm afraid the man won't be very grateful to me for allowing you to get him out at this hour."

"I'll be responsible for all that."

The clerk woke a colored youth, who acted in the capacity of night porter, and sent him up to Blackwall's room.

The fellow was gone for some time, and when he came back he announced:

"De man ain't dar, sah!"

"Not there?" cried the clerk.

"No, sah; de room am unlocked, an' de bed hab not been slept in."

"That is queer. He we-t up to his room shortly after the performance in the Monte Carlo."

"He ain't dar now."

"You hear?" and the clerk turned to the stranger.

"Yes, I hear. I'll settle down and wait for him, if you don't object to that."

"Very well; settle yourself down, then, if your intention is good, and wait for him," the clerk gave permission.

"My intention is all right, don't be uneasy about that," the stranger assured.

He took a chair and "settled down" to wait.

Only a little time later the door opened and Lucius Blackwall entered.

He was clad in a cloak and slouch hat, as though he had not cared to be recognized on the street.

"Thought you were in bed, sir," remarked the clerk.

"No, not yet, but I'll be there mighty soon, now," was the sharp answer.

"Well, here's a man to see you, sir," the clerk said further. "He would have us call you up, and that's how we came to know you were out," and he waved his hand toward the stranger as he spoke.

"You want to see me?" Blackwall demanded.

"Yes, in private."

"Who are you?"

"A friend who comes from another friend, sir. I will make known my identity in private."

"Very well; come up to my room. But, mind you, no attempt at tricks, or you will repent of it. I am armed, as you see," and he displayed the handle of a revolver.

"That's all right," the stranger carelessly passed. "You will have no call to use it on me."

Blackwall led the way, and the pair passed from the room.

Reaching the room above, Blackwall made a light, and then he closed the door as silently as possible.

"Now," he said, in low tones, "take a seat and make known your business with me. Keep as silent as possible; no need to waken others."

"Perhaps you had rather have me make known my identity first," the stranger suggested.

"Well, yes, you may do that, if you like."

"Then, behold."

The man took off his false whiskers and hair and cast off his rough coat, and, lo! there was—Soapstone Sam, the Slippery Sport.

"Soapstone Sam!" the astonished man gasped.

"As you see, sir," was the smiling answer.

"How did you get out of the jail?"

"Slipped out, sir. I am not called the Slippery Sport for nothing. It is a way I have."

"Did you get Stonecut out, too?"

"No; and that is what brings me to you."

"Well, let me hear."

"You can well believe that I have no friendly feeling toward this camp now, sir."

"Hardly to be supposed you would have."

"And if I can get in a blow I'm going to do it."

"Can't blame you."

"I might have got Stonecut out, if he had been slippery enough, but he wasn't, and so I had to let him stay."

"I see."

"He had proposed to me that I join him in this scheme to fleece Deadwood Dick, and I had agreed to do it, but we were nabbed, as you know, and so that was knocked in the head."

"Yes, curse the luck."

"But, we are not downed."

"Though likely to be."

"Think so?"

"Deadwood Dick and his men are proving too many for us."

"They have dealt us one heavy blow, that is true, but we are on our feet once more."

"Captain Jack is in limbo."

"We'll have him out."

"Then you are still in the thing?"

"More than ever, sir."

"Good!"

"You see, Captain Jack proposed that I should come and see you, and report to you as taking his place."

"He proposed that?"

"Yes."

"Then he had full confidence in you, it seems."

"He has reason to know the kind of man I am. I wanted to get him out, but the risk was great, so I accepted his proposition."

"And you are to take his place."

"If you agree to it."

"What have I to do with it?"

The Slippery Sport smiled.

"Stonecut gave me the hint," he answered. "He did not tell me all, but said you could let me in just as far as you wanted me to go."

"How do I know I can trust you?"

"I don't ask you to trust me, sir. You need not tell me anything. Only get the

winning cards into my hand, and let me play them out for you the same as Captain Jack was to have done."

"Do you know what his plan was?"

"Not in full."

"Why did he not tell you?"

"He was going to do so, after the play at the Monte Carlo, but we were nabbed there, as you know."

"Well, are you willing to take the risks he was taking?"

"That is what I have come here to do, sir."

"They were not slight ones."

"Of course, I reserve the right to change the plans a little according to my own judgment."

"I can't deny you that privilege. But, what about getting Captain Jack out of the jug?"

"That is to be done, when we get control of the camp."

"Well, I'll tell you what the plan was. You see, Stonecut was not the leader of the revolt."

"I know that."

"Did he tell you who was?"

"Syde Lester, the gambler sport?"

"Exactly. He was the instigator and prime mover in it."

"And he was to help you if you would help them. Now I begin to grasp the situation."

"That was it. I am here for the purpose of making Claudia Steyger my wife, by any means, and they were to help me. For that help, I was to aid them in working the people up to this mutiny."

"Well, have you succeeded in getting the girl?"

"No; for that cursed performance at the saloon put her on her guard, and she gave me the slip."

"That need not trouble you, however, sir, for we can lay some trap to get her into our hands. At the same time we will plan to get the best of Deadwood Dick and relieve him of some of his superfluous wealth. The thing can be done."

CHAPTER XIII.

DEADWOOD DICK DOWNED.

THE response the rascally Blackwall made to that was to reach out and give the Slippery Sport his hand.

"It seems to strike you favorably," the sport observed.

"That has the true ring to it," Blackwall declared. "I now know that Stonecut was not mistaken in you, and that I can trust you."

"I don't ask you to do that, however. Wait till the thing is done, and then I'll try and stand whatever you may have to say about me. Now, let us lay our plans of action."

"To do that, we must talk about both sides, and see just how the two plans can be worked together. I must get control of that girl."

"It seems to be a case of love in dead earnest."

"It is a case of business."

"Well, all the more reason why you should have her, then."

"You are right. There is profit here for both of us. And, if you want to, it may be larger for you than it could have been before."

"How is that?"

"Count Captain Jack out of it."

"That wouldn't be hardly a fair deal, though."

"What of it? He can't help himself, and, if you will pledge yourself to aid me all you can, I won't stand in the way of your dumping him."

"I'll do all I can for you, but I don't think I'll go back on Stonecut. I'll think about that part of it. What was the plan for the night?"

"Why, he was to have helped me capture the girl, there would have been a sham marriage, I would have made her my wife in solid fact, and she would have accepted her fate."

"And you couldn't get her?"

"As I told you, she took alarm."

"And you didn't find her."

"Exactly. I went to her house, with my helper, Jugg, but she was not in the house. Then we found out where she was."

"Where?"

"In Deadwood Dick's house and under his care."

"Whew! The dog is dead for this trip, then. You can't get her to-night, out of his hands."

"I know it. What can I do?"

"Well, now, I have a plan to suggest."

"What is it?"

"We'll let this thing rest very quietly for a day or two till the alarm is over."

"And what then?"

"The girl will be less cautious, and there will be an opportunity to nab her."

"Yes, that's so; but, meanwhile, what about the other scheme?"

"It will be the same with that. To-night the camp is under arms, and it would make a bloody fight to try to take the place by force."

"Yes, there is sense in that."

"Then, too, it will give us a chance to get a blow at Deadwood Dick personally, you see."

"Provided he does not get in his blow first."

"I am willing to take the chances of that, if you are."

"Anything, so long as I get hold of that girl. And, I must do so before she is married to that upstart Stempler."

"To-morrow will afford us plenty of time to plan that."

"And plenty of time for them to marry, too."

"We can see to it that they do not have the opportunity, somehow."

"We might get hold of Stempler and put him out of our way for a time, and so be doubly sure of it."

"Too late for that to-night, and daylight will give little opportunity. The excitement of the camp will probably stand in the way of their marrying at present."

While they were talking a pistol-shot was heard in the street.

Instantly, before they had time to question what it meant, the whole street was in an uproar.

The protecting forces had been on the alert, and at the first alarm they were out and ready for action. But, they found no foe to oppose them.

Putting out the light, Blackwall and his guest sprung to the window.

In front of the hotel a great crowd was quickly gathering, and under the glare of the electric lights everything was revealed.

There in the center of the crowd, on the ground, lay the body of a man.

"Who is it?" they heard the voice of Old Avalanche demanding.

"Deadwood Dick," was the answer from some one near the spot where the body lay.

"What! Great hambone o' horrificatin' multitudinashuns! You don't mean ter say my Dicky boy has been killed, do ye? Who was ther cuss what done et? Only let me git holt—"

"Make way therel!" the voice of Mayor Carleton broke in. "Let me through to the front."

And then the shouts became confusing

"Shall we go down?" asked Blackwall.

"May as well," the sport assented.

He hastily put on his disguise, and they went down.

"What is your name?" Blackwall asked, as they descended to the street.

"Johnson Green," the answer.

"All right."

By the time they reached the street it seemed as though the whole camp was out, as perhaps it was, except the women and children.

"What's the trouble?" Blackwall demanded.

"Deadwood Dick has been killed."

"Who killed him?"

"They think it was Soapstone Sam, the Slippery Sport."

"Get out! He is in jail!"

"No; he has 'scaped out of there."

"What's up?" another voice demanded, just behind them.

This was Hyde Lester, the gambler sport, who had just come out, finishing his dressing as he came.

Soapstone Sam stumbled and fell against something and fell against the gambler, but offered immediate apology for his awkwardness as soon as he recovered his balance.

"Look out where you are going next time," the gambler growled.

"Accident, I assure you," the disguised sport craved pardon.

The gambler gave him a dark look, and pressed toward the middle of the crowd where the body lay.

"Is the report true?" he demanded, as he reached the front. "Is it Deadwood Dick?"

"It is the lawyer, Barrington Burr," was the reply some one gave.

"But he and Deadwood Dick are one and the same?"

"Lor' Jerusha! I believe they ar', I believe they ar'!" wailed Old Avalanche.

"This is ther saddest blow that ever struck this hyer old hulk sence ther day when ther first Dicky went under."

"Make room," cried the mayor, as he rose from an examination of the body. "I find he is not dead. Make way, and let us get him home."

"Then et is Deadwood Dick?"

"I cannot be sure yet."

Billy Bucket now pushed to the front with force, and catching the mayor by the arm, whispered something to him.

The mayor nodded, and called to those around to help him carry the body.

While they were taking the wounded man up, Billy drew Old Avalanche aside and whispered also to him, and for a brief second the face of the old scout was a puzzle.

At the same time Johnny Smile was running in the direction of Deadwood Dick's cottage.

He reached there, and was the first to break the sad news.

That excitement prevailed need not be said.

Johnny told his story in almost whispers to those most interested, and waited there for the coming of the crowd.

In due time they came, bearing the body on a shutter, and it was carried into the house tenderly and taken in charge by the members of the household and the guests who were there.

A doctor had been summoned, and he was on hand.

When the door had been closed, the crowd remained in the street in something of awed silence.

They wanted to learn the truth.

Finally Mayor Carleton, Old Avalanche, and others came out.

"What is et?" one man called.

"Is he dead?" another.

"Was et Deadwood Dick?"

"The doctor says the wound is dangerous, and that he may die," was the answer the mayor gave. "Yes, it is Deadwood Dick."

"Yas, ther noble Richard!" cried Avalanche. "If thar is man's blood in yer veins, citizens, yer will show et at this hyer time. Great hambone! ef Deadwood Dicky dies thar will be a good many of ye go hungry to bed, and well ye know et! Thar

never was a squarer or whiter sport in ther world than Dicky!"

"You are right!" chimed in one man.

And then the crowd tried to raise a cheer, in which they more than half succeeded.

The element in it that had been against Dick was not quite ready to come back to his side again, but not a voice was heard raised against him.

Dick's friends, however, talked of his virtues and good deeds, and his foes could not help but acknowledge that he had been their friends in many ways. The uprising against his rule had received a dash of cold water.

The mayor, Avalanche, and others, went back to the office.

There the matter was talked over, and the order went forth to find and arrest Soapstone Sam, the Slippery Sport.

And this the honest citizens set about trying to do.

The sport was not to be found, however, and while the hunt was still going on daylight dawned.

It had been a trying night, and everybody was glad to see the welcome sunlight once again. That day was destined to end the terrible strain; a great denouement was in store for the young city.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME EXCITING EVENTS.

It were needless to say that Soapstone Sam had not been retaken.

Disguised as he was, he could move about with the crowd without danger of being recognized.

The great mystery was, how he had escaped from the jail, and it was agreed that he was well entitled to the name he bore—Slippery Sport.

The camp was very quiet, and even though the Little Brown Jugg tried to stir up strife he did not succeed. The cowardly shooting of Deadwood Dick had worked a change in public sentiment.

Some of the rebellious ones appeared at the mayor's office and paid their rents, expressing their sympathy for Dick and their sorrow for their mean action toward him.

The mayor posted a notice.

It was to the effect that he hoped the matter might be allowed to rest quietly until the result of the wounded man's injury was known.

Some time after the posting of that notice there was a stir of excitement in the camp.

Other posted notices had been discovered.

There were two or three of them, in conspicuous places, all alike, worded in this manner:

CITIZENS OF BRISTOL CITY—

"There is a false report abroad in the land. I am not the person who shot Deadwood Dick. I do, however, know who did the deed, and it is my intention to bring him to account for it. So, when I make myself known to you, don't be hasty about going for me, and thus, perhaps, blocking my game, but give me a hearing."

"SOAPSTONE SAM"

One of these had been found on the door of the mayor's office.

The mayor, Joe Garry, Old Avalanche, and others, were discussing it in the office, a little later.

"What do ye think of et?" the old scout asked.

"I have a notion it's honest," avowed Joe.

"And so have I," another man agreed.

"I don't believe that sport is a murderer."

"He has shown himself to be too fair-minded to shoot a man down in the dark like that," declared the mayor. "I hope he can clear himself."

"Great hambone, yes!" cried Avalanche.

"Of course you will give him a fair show ter do et, mayor?"

"Certainly."

"That is right, every time. Great hambone what slewed ther Fillysteens! Let us git hold of ther right man, and you bet he

won't git out o' jail, even though he is lubricated with watch oil. And ef Dicky dies—"

The old fellow could not find words strong enough to express what would happen in that event.

While they were talking a man entered.

It was the gambler sport, Hyde Lester.

"How is Bristol?" he asked.

"The doctor says he has a chance for his life," answered Carleton.

"I am glad to hear it," was the good word.

"I hope he will pull through and get well."

"Lor' Jerusha, yes!" from Avalanche.

"It was a coward's work, whoever did it."

"Yes, truly."

"And what think you of this posted notice from Soapstone Sam?"

"Hardly know what to think of it," answered the mayor.

"Do you take any stock in it?"

"Well, we hate to believe the sport would do such a thing."

"But, it looks reasonable that he did do it. Deadwood Dick found him out for what he was, and ordered his arrest, and it stands to reason that he would have no very friendly feeling toward Bristol."

"It looks that way, I admit."

"And the way he talks about putting the crime on some one else—that looks a little thin."

"Still, if innocent himself, it might not be unreasonable to believe he saw the deed done, for he escaped from jail about that time, or a little earlier."

"Which is all the more proof against him. He might say *you* did it, or that *I* did it, but I guess he would have to show some proof further than his bare word to support such a charge."

"Well, we can only wait and see whom he will bring to account, and what his proof is."

"I suppose so. And, I am sorry that I am not able to stay here and see the thing out, but I am called away. A messenger just came in to find me, and I am called home."

"Sickness?"

"Death. My wife is dead."

"That is truly bad, sir. I sympathize with you."

"I only wanted to say this, that I would not put too much reliance on what this sport may say."

"Then you know him?"

"I have known him. He does not bear a good name."

While they were talking, Johnny Smile came into the office with a rush with a note in his hand.

"This is for you, boss," he cried, handing the missive to Carleton; "and this is for *you*!" turning upon the gambler sport with a drawn and cocked revolver.

"Wh—what means this?" that astonished worthy gasped.

"It means that you are my mutton!" was the stern reply. "And, you will be dead mutton at that, if you move even a finger!"

Everybody looked on in amazement.

"What means this, Johnny?" asked Carleton.

"Read the note," was the response.

The lad did not take his eyes off the man, and the gambler sport, pale, stood helpless.

Nor was Johnny Smile alone his captor, for now Billy Bucket had another revolver aimed at him on the other side.

Billy well knew that Johnny must have good reason for his action, and meant to make doubly sure of the man till some explanation was had of the matter.

"This is some infernal mistake," the gambler sport cried. "Put up those weapons, you fools! or you will repent it."

"Nary a put up, yet!"

"And you stand just as still as you can," added Billy, "for the least move might jar the trigger."

"Lor' Jerusha!" the old scout was saying, "what *do* et mean, boyees? Great hambone of ther days of Dan'l in ther lions den, but my narves ar' all of a tingle wi' 'citement!'"

"This is serious," remarked the mayor, who had now read the note.

"What is et?"

"You, sir," to the gambler sport, "are charged with the shooting."

"What!"

"The fact."

"And who makes the charge?"

"Scapstone Sam."

"The liar and rascal! Let him come and face me and prove it if he can! What did I tell you just a moment ago?"

"Well, sir, he says he will bring the proof, and under the circumstances I must take ycu prisoner. Men, disarm him and bind his hands."

The fellow, pale before, was now deathly white.

"I will not submit to it!" he cried. "This is an outrage! I must be on my way to my dead wife! This is a senseless charge! Why, I can prove by a dozen at least that I was in the hotel when the shooting was done!"

"You will be given the chance, sir."

"Then you mean to hold me?"

"I must do so."

"Yas, you bet!" cried Avalanche. "Ef ther charge proves a fizzle, then you will be let go with a reward of merit."

"What does the note say?" asked Garry.

The mayor read it aloud:

"MAYOR CARLETON:—

"The gambler sport, Lester, is preparing to get away from the camp. Do not let him go. He is the man who shot Bristol, as I can and will prove. Hold fast to him, and set his trial for three o'clock this afternoon on the Plaza. I will be on hand with my proofs."

SOAPSTONE SAM."

"And you take his word against mine?" cried the prisoner.

"We have to do so, under the circumstances," the mayor sternly replied.

The man had now been disarmed and bound, and was ready to be taken away to the jail, storming furiously, though that was of no use; and some of the young city's policemen being called, he was led off.

Lucius Blackwall and his friend, Johnson Green, were seated on the piazza of the hotel at the time.

"Hello!" cried Blackwall. "What means that?"

"It looks as though the man is under arrest," answered the disguised Soapstone Sam.

"What is that for?"

"For the shooting of Deadwood Dick, I shall say, at a guess."

"But, *he* did not do it, Sport; *we* know that. He came out of the hotel after we did, at the time it was done."

"They no doubt have proof, however, or they would not make the arrest."

"I suppose so, but— Ha! look there!"

Mr. Jugg, the Little Brown Jugg, was seen being brought from the direction of the post-office in the keeping of another couple of the camp's deputies.

"Another arrest, I guess," observed Mr. Green, quietly.

"What have they taken him for?"

"Because he is active in stirring up strife, if for nothing more, I suppose," the rejoinder. "I tried to caution him to let the matter rest for the day, but he knew best."

"This arresting business is going on a little too fast to suit me. And, what are all those fellows coming this way for?"

The mayor, Old Avalanche, Joe Garry, Billy and Johnny, and several others were crossing in the direction of the piazza. They did not look at the persons there, however, but seemed to be going further."

Just when they came abreast with Blackwall and his companion, however, they wheeled suddenly, each man of them point-

ing a revolver at the couple and the mayor ordering their hands up. That order was promptly obeyed by the disguised sport, the other following his example.

CHAPTER XV.

UNMASKING AND SURPRISES.

THE two fellows were in a tight fix, truly. But, though the disguised Slippery Sport obeyed, he was quick to demand an explanation.

"What is ther meanin' of this hyer?" he cried. "I'm a stranger here, and I know of no reason why ye should 'rest me. What does et mean?"

"Just what I want to know!" stormed Blackwall. "Seems to me you are carrying things with a pretty high hand, Sir Mayor. What is the reason for this outrage, sir, I demand?"

"It is not necessary for me to explain," the mayor quietly made answer. "It will be shown in good time."

"And why is it not necessary? I think we have the right to know now why we are put—"

"Each of you know well enough why he is arrested, sir."

"You are a liar—"

"Great hambone of 'eppydemnick demoralizashuns!" broke in Old Avalanche. "Ye had better be keerful how ye sling yer pet names 'round hyer! We hev got ye dead ter rights, and that's enough."

"But, there must be some mistake," Blackwall urged. "There is no reason why you should arrest me. What is the charge you make?"

"You will learn that at your hearing this afternoon," the mayor briefly responded.

At a signal from him, then, the prisoners were taken away.

These arrests caused the greatest excitement in the camp, as can be imagined. The other matter was forgotten in the face of all this.

The uprising against the rights of Deadwood Dick was now without a leader, and its backbone had been broken. The tide was now setting the other way, many returning to the side of right.

It was now understood that Deadwood Dick's injury was not serious, and that he would be on hand at the trial that afternoon.

Before the time set for the hearing the street in front of the Grand Pacific was black with people.

Work had been suspended, and the whole population of the city was assembled.

A roomy platform, used on public occasions, had been brought out and set up, and around it surged the crowd.

All were eager to see the prisoners brought to trial.

Finally they were announced as coming, and room was made for them to reach the platform.

The officers had them well under guard, and the mayor and others mounting the platform with them, the preliminary trial was formally opened.

Hyde Lester was the first prisoner called. He stood up, and the charge was made against him, to which he pleaded not guilty, demanding the proofs.

The first witness called to appear against him was Barrington Burr.

Up from the side of the platform rose the seedy lawyer, dropping an old overcoat which he had assumed as a disguise.

His head was bandaged, but otherwise he seemed to be as good as ever.

A murmur of excitement ran through the crowd at sight of him, and some one proposed three cheers for Deadwood Dick.

The cheers were given with a hearty will, for it was now well understood that this seedy lawyer and Deadwood Dick were one, and the people were glad to know he had not been seriously hurt.

The lawyer bowed profoundly, and said:

"Thank you, gentlemen: thank you, thank you!" and he tried to wave the crowd to silence. "But, you are mistaken, for I am not Deadwood Dick."

"Not Deadwood Dick?"

"Oh! you git out, now, wi' that!"

"Et's too late in ther day ter say that now!"

"But, gentlemen, it is so. Why will you persist in saying I am Deadwood Dick when I tell you I am not—"

"That's too thin! Three cheers more fer Deadwood Richard, ther Royal Prince of Pistol Pocket—that was! Every man of ye let 'er whoop, now!"

And this time the crowd fairly let itself loose.

"Mistaken! mistaken!" the seedy lawyer firmly insisted. "Listen to reason, I beg of you. You force an honor upon me that I have no right to, my friends. Oh! that this man Deadwood might appear!"

At that the crowd laughed and whooped anew, thinking it only a rare piece of acting on the part of their worshiped hero.

"No, no," Mr. Burr still insisted, "I am not he; I am here simply as a witness against this prisoner; nothing more. He is the man who shot at me last night, mistaking me, as you do, for Deadwood Dick."

The crowd quieted as he spoke, and being able to be heard he repeated what he had said, adding:

"Yes, he is the man, people of Bristol City; I saw him and tried to dodge, but his bullet was too quick for me, though no doubt my moving saved my life, for it only stunned me. He is the man, and although he did not kill me it was no fault of his. His intention to kill was good enough."

"It is false!" the gambler sport cried. "I did not not fire the shot at all. It is a mistake."

"It is the truth," insisted the seedy lawyer. "You took me to be Deadwood Dick, the same mistake so many have made, and you meant to put me out of the way. You will perhaps find further proof forthcoming before we are done."

"Bring it forth, then. I defy you to do it. My word is probably worth as much as yours, and, you are not dead anyhow. Bring forth your proof, and let us have it settled. Whether you are Deadwood Dick or not, you shall see this thing through, now that it has been started."

"It will be seen to the end," spoke the mayor.

"And then, if the proof does not stand, look out for me," the prisoner warned them.

"And the proof cannot stand, for I was in bed when the shooting was done."

The mayor ordered silence, and the next witness called was Soapy Sam, the Slippery Sport.

This call created excitement anew, and men looked this way and that, eager to see him respond, for it was a mystery what had become of him.

A moment more, and then rose up the prisoner, Johnson Green, and one of the policemen freeing his hands he removed his disguise, and, lo! it was Soapstone Sam the Slippery Sport!

A murmur of applause ran through the crowd.

"Gentlemen," he spoke, calmly, "this man certainly *is* guilty of the crime with which he is charged. I suspected him, with good reason, at the time of the shooting, and as he came out of the hotel I purposely fell against him and in so doing removed his revolver from his pocket without his knowing it. One of the chambers was empty, and the weapon was still warm."

"That is a lie!" the prisoner shouted. "It is more likely that it was *you*, Soapstone Sam, who tried to kill him, supposing him to be Deadwood Dick! This is a put-up job, men of Bristol City, and I call upon you

as men of sound sense and good judgment to say whether I can be guilty of this thing. What proof does he bring for what he says? Why not arrest him and put him on trial for the crime? I charge him with the attempt to kill Deadwood Dick!"

"What object could I possibly have in killing Deadwood Dick?" the sport asked in his cool way.

"Why, revenge because he found you out and ordered you locked up, that is what. Clear yourself of it if you can; I charge with—"

"Hold!" the sport ordered. "You L. gone about far enough. Citizens, you shall judge whether I could possibly have any object in taking the life of Deadwood Dick. What think ye?"

With a quick motion, while speaking, he removed further disguise, and to the amazement of all there stood ^{and, or, the} beneath the Redoubtable Richard himself—~~Dead~~ ^{Dead} ~~or, The~~ ^{or, The} Dick, Junior!

The cheering that immediately followed was for some moments almost deafening. This was a denouement indeed!

Men fell to wondering, now, how it was they had been unable to recognize him before.

The whole crowd was for him now, to a man almost.

He had nobly won!

"Well, friends, you see me in proper person, now," he spoke, as soon as he could be heard. "Mr. Burr told you the truth, but you would not believe him, and when he was shot I allowed that incident to work in my favor."

"I took advantage of your mistake in a way you can now understand well enough without my explaining it in detail. I have been among you in a triple disguise, as it were, and everything has been working well to my advantage in carrying out my plans in this case. Are you now ready for my story?"

Needless question, as the eager shout attested.

"Well, this man," pointing to the gambler sport, "is one Burk Dorris, a fellow whom I sent to prison some years ago, and who, coming out, has tried to take revenge upon me for the punishment he justly received."

"We both came here on the same day, as you will remember, and I overheard him taking his oath up there on the hill, and when he had gone on I registered a vow to oppose him and cast my weight on Deadwood Dick's side. I was coming here in disguise for a purpose needless to mention now."

"You have seen the outcome. His plan has failed utterly, and he is again in the hands of the law, or soon will be, and it is not likely to go easy with him. He will probably go back where he came from and spend another delightful term as a guest of the State. He was at the bottom of all the trouble here, with Jackson Stonecut and Brownlow Jugg as his helpers."

To say that the prisoners were utterly disconcerted, but feebly expresses the state of mind into which the disclosure had thrown them.

And for the citizens generally—they could but stare and listen while Dick addressed them.

"This other prisoner, Lucius Blackwall," Dick continued, "came here with a sinister purpose in his heart, and he, Dorris, and others, worked together to help along their schemes mutually. Blackwall came into possession of knowledge that Miss Claudia Steyger had fallen heir to a considerable fortune, and he wanted it."

"Hang him!" some one sung out.

"It would serve him right, to hang him a little," Dick agreed.

"Then let's do et! And, we'll make a job of et while we are about et, you can bet on't."

"No, no!" the prisoner cried in alarm.

"Let the law take its course. "You can't do anything till you have proven me guilty, you know. Let the law take its course with me, gentlemen."

CHAPTER XVI.

IN CONCLUSION.

DEADWOOD DICK waved the crowd to order.

His magnetic presence controlled them, and he was master of the situation. "I have no fear but that the law will take its course, sir," he assured. "You are likely to feel its weight."

"Provided I am proven guilty."

"And I'll take care of that part of it, you knave!"

"Give us ther rest of ther yarn," somebody eagerly urged on. "We ar' dyin' ter hear et all."

"Rather than ~~you~~ die," said Dick, smiling, "I'll hasten on with what I have to say further. His little game was blocked, as you have seen, and Miss Steyger and her lover will be happy yet."

"Is it necessary for me to explain every little trick of the game? My escape from the jail you can account for without my aid, surely. I simply made known my identity to the guardsman inside, and he helped me. Then, when your mayor came there, he explained it to him."

"Then, when the lawyer here was shot and stunned, I sent Billy Bucket to the front to tell Carleton the trick I wanted played, and it was carried out. And in the mean time I was here among you as Johnson Green, as you are now aware. Other points are too trifling to bring up for explanation, since you can understand everything from the clue you have."

"And you, my friends, who were deluded into this uprising against my rights, you were blinded."

"It was the intention of these rascals to get you into the trouble and then, when they had gotten away with all the valuable plunder they could, to leave you in the lurch."

"I have been working in with them, as they know to their discomfort, and I understood their game perfectly."

"There is little more to explain. We got there nicely, as you see. I will now introduce Mrs. Bristol and my helper, Detective Hardy, after which I will address you on the matter of my rights here."

Everybody looked eagerly, and the Darcys, brother and sister, mounted to the platform and bowed their acknowledgments to the crowd, at the same time removing their disguises.

Cheering greeted them, louder and longer than ever, if possible.

Billy Bucket, Johnny Smile, and Old Avalanche, almost whooped themselves hoarse in their efforts to do justice to the occasion.

"Great rambusterficated old hambone!" yelled Old Avalanche. "This hyer makes me feel like a boy again! Ef I only had Prudence Cordeliar and Florence Night-in-a-gale hyer to rejoice wi' me, how happy I would be!"

When the uproar had abated, then Deadwood Dick presented all his proofs against the prisoners and there was no loophole left for their escape. The case against them was complete, and they were held. Dick made a telling speech, setting forth his rights as proprietor there, and the crowd was won over, to a man.

The rest of the day was spent in a general jubilee.

Later on, each of the dissatisfied ones was dealt with separately, and Dick either bought out or sold out, so that nothing of the kind could come up again.

The seedy lawyer, Darrington Burr, proved to be just what he had claimed to be, a drunken wreck whom rum was fast carrying to a dishonored grave. But for that, he

might have been a king among men, for he had plenty of both brain and muscle.

Dick rewarded him suitably for his part in the matter, for he had thrown his weight in the balance on Dick's side. He also offered the wretched man some good advice, but that was lost upon him. A fallen man, he never hoped to rise again. He lived only to drink, he declared.

He tarried a little while at Bristol City, and then went on his weary way—to the grave.

The prisoners were sent away, and received their deserts at the hands of the law. And they received the full measure they so well deserved.

There was a wedding at the camp not long after, when the little "schoolmarm" and Huber Stempler were made one. That they were a happy couple goes without saying.

Claudia came into her fortune all in good time, and invested it there in the valley pocket.

Of the others little need be said, in closing.

Dick's friends still rally to his standard, and their name there at Bristol City is Legion.

Nor does Bristol City hold them all, for they are to be found in every corner of the land—yes, in almost every nook in the whole English-speaking world.

Long life to Deadwood Dick, Jr.

THE END.

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